A WONDER-BOOK OF OLD ROMANCE

BY H. J. HARVEY DAWSON

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A

Wonder Book of Old Romance

"The werewolf would have sprung upon her if William had not caught him by the neck."

Page 52.

A WONDER BOOK OF OLD ROMANCE

BY F. J. HARVEY DARTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
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'DOGGEREL RHYME" and "drasty [worthless] speech" were the terms applied by a critic of great common-sense to the tale which Chaucer, with singular artistic perception, put into his own mouth on the way to Canterbury. The Host of the Tabard Inn heard the story of "Sir Topaz" with infinite impatience. He imagined, perhaps, that he was listening to one of those "romances of price,"

"Of Horn child and of Ypotys,
Of Bevis and sir Gy,
Of Sir Libeux and Pleyn-damour;"

and that kind of rambling entertainment afforded him neither mirth nor doctrine. He perceived nothing of the deft parody in Chaucer's flowing lines. He saw

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only that tales of this sort wasted time and seldom came to a point. He gave voice, in fact, to the criticism which would be made alike by the plain man and by the awakening poetic spirit of the Renaissance.

The criticism was perfectly true, from a literary point of view. The older romances were for the most part of small poetic merit, while their construction was often ill-balanced and digressive. There is hardly one of the features dwelt upon by Chaucer which cannot be paralleled in them. Sir Topaz was a knight "fair and gent"; so were Sir Guy, Sir Bevis, and the rest of them. He came to a wood where was "many a wild beast, both buck and hare": those ferocious creatures pastured there, apparently, because the poet had to fill up a line somehow, much as the author of "Sir Bevis," anticipating "King Lear," was forced to help out his metre with "rats and mice and such small deer." Sir Topaz wore "a breech and eke a shirt"; his face was as white as the finest bread; "he had a seemly nose": in like manner every detail of clothing, figure, and armour, relevant or irrelevant, is dwelt on in the old romances. He "pricked over stile and stone," in his quest for the elf-queen, with ease, rapidity, and an absence of adventure; so too Amys journeys many days to seek Amylion, without, so far as the poet tells us, any accident or any ordinary occurrence of daily life except a feeling of great fatigue.

But if the romances are as a whole lacking both in poetical feeling and in the deeper sort of humour, they are usually very good as stories. Moreover, they

reflect unconsciously the modes of thought and life in the Middle Ages. Those of which a prose version is given in this volume are selected mainly for these qualities. It is possible that some day the readers of them will be induced to study the originals; but meanwhile this collection is offered as a story-book which incidentally contains traces of what our forefathers thought and did in the days before printing was invented. The majority of the tales have not been put into modern narrative prose before; but the present text (taken from English versions of the romances, in every instance) is not wholly a literal rendering, for the reasons which Harry Bailly adduced against Chaucer's tale of Topaz; "drasty speech" and "doggerel rhyme" make the reader's ears ache before long.

They fall naturally into several classes. "Guy of Warwick" is a typical romance of chivalry; immensely long, rather rambling in plot, and filled with little traits which reflect the curious, recondite simplicity of the mediæval mind. Considerations of space prevented the inclusion of the very similar romance of "Sir Bevis." "Sir Cleges and the Cherries," "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," and "The Fair Unknown" (the title is a mere translation of "Lebeaus Disconus" —"Sir Libeux") are incidents from the mass of Arthurian epic which most readers know through Malory; they are not, however, included in "Morte Darthur." "Havelok the Dane" and "King Horn" are very English tales, and are probably the oldest in the book; they show more self-consciousness, more sense

of literary effect, both in idea and in thought, than most of their companions. "King Horn," in particular, contains one of the few flashes of real poetic imagination in the whole cycle of romances—the farewell of Horn to the boat which brought him from Suddenne. "Amys and Amylion" and "Floris and Blanchefleur"—the one the mediæval parallel to the legend of Orestes and Pylades, the other the outstanding love story of the period—are each dominated by a consistent idea; so, to a slightly less extent, are "King Robert of Sicily" and "Sir Degoré and the Broken Sword." "The Seven Wise Masters" is a singular collection of moral stories and primeval fables; a mixture of the "Arabian Nights," the *Gesta Romanorum*, and such stories as were worked into the *Decameron*. "William and the Werewolf," which was translated from the French "in ease of English men and English speech," contains many features not very commonly seen in combination in these romances—something of the restlessness of chivalry, the simplicity and directness of a romantic story, a suggestion of folklore and magic in the omniscient, benevolent werewolf, and possibly, in some of the details, a certain amount of actual history. "The Ash and the Hazel" is the only romance which can be ascribed to a known author; it is taken from a vigorous English version of Marie's "Lay le Fraine" ("The Lay of the Ash").

In the tales with an English atmosphere there is not so much mediæval detail as in those in which the hero fares abroad. A reflection of the difficulties

of mediæval sieges occurs in the brief mention of Fikenhild's impregnable sea-girt castle in "King Horn": a fortress—built of "lime and stone," as we are always told when strength is indicated—in a situation like that of Mont St. Michel could, if properly held, resist every enemy save hunger. The device of gaining entrance in the guise of harpers illustrates both this point and the customs of Middle Age entertainment. I am not sure, however, that the more fastidious knights, like Guy, Gawain, and Amylion, would not have reprehended treachery of this kind, even in a good cause; though the use of weapons with magical properties was not repugnant to them. The rules of war were extraordinarily strict and conventional; and honour, if it was blind in some respects, was very keen-eyed in others. It was not so severe and rigid in the treatment of women, for instance, as one would like to think: "The Two Dreams," in "The Seven Wise Masters," and the opening scene of "Sir Degoré and the Broken Sword," for instance, do not reveal that high and noble regard for womankind which is popularly supposed to be typical of chivalry. But where other knights were concerned, the code of honour was elaborately austere. A tournament was ordered by innumerable rules. A pledge, or a challenge to be upheld by combat, involved the giving of safe securities for appearance, or imprisonment till the appointed day, with heavy penalties for default; in "Amys and Amylion" those penalties were all but inflicted on two self-sacrificing women. In actual combat, the most punctilious courtesy was observed.

Guy allowed the black giant Amoraunt to drink when he was weary—it would have been unbecoming to kill one's foe in such a weak state; and he was surprised and enraged at the pagan's refusal of a similar request. The same thing happened in one of "The Fair Unknown's" encounters. Giants seem to have been an untrustworthy and ill-conditioned race as a rule; but one of them was chivalrous enough to alight from his horse to meet the unhorsed Sir Degoré on level terms. In fact, a fair fight and no favour, under rules as numerous, minute, and binding as those of a modern game, was what every good knight expected and tried to secure. In the most original and striking story in this collection, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," the whole point is the immaculate Sir Gawain's momentary lapse from the high, if artificial, standard of romantic chivalry.

Another noticeable feature is the underlying assumption, in most of the stories, that European society is feudal, and that it must sustain, at all costs, the faith and customs of Christendom against the ever-present, ruthless, and innumerable Saracen. The feudal overlord's relations with his vassals are constantly apparent. In "Guy of Warwick" they are continually referred to. In "Amys and Amylion" we find a curious position in which the Orestes of the story becomes, through a fortunate marriage, the overlord of the Pylades. There is little mention of any population outside the knightly circles. The fighting and set battles in "William and the Werewolf" are concentrated round the protagonists. But kings, barons, earls, knights and squires are clearly

marked off from one another, and low birth, as many heroes prove, is only likely to rise to eminence when associated with exceptional valour. The Saracens seem to have been no more fully differentiated. There is no hint of any distinction between the invading hordes: they are simply vile pagans bent on slaughter, rapine, and a bloodthirsty system of making proselytes. The magnificence of their dwellings, however, is often dwelt on with appreciation. Carbuncle stones of prodigious size were common among them, as Guy and Floris discovered. The description of Babylon in "Floris and Blanchefleur" is very full and sumptuous; it embodies many traditional features, some of which appear even so late as in the writings of Webbe, a stout-hearted Elizabethan seaman who endured much at Turkish hands.

On the personal and intellectual sides, the details are somewhat meagre and unvarying. The test of Prince Florentin's learning, in "The Seven Wise Masters," is instructive; and the tradition of the Seven Sages themselves is very old. Guy's lady, Felice, had most of the qualities of academic perfection, as well as a remarkable conception of the proper attributes of a suitor. Dreams formed no small part of life. They appear not only prophetically, but as warnings of present danger; and in most instances—notably in "Amys and Amylion" and "Guy of Warwick"—they lead to immediate and opportune action. There is not much magic in the romances; the most striking examples are the appearance of the Green Knight, which is attributed to the notorious Morgan

Le Fay, the consultation of Merlin (in one of "The Seven Wise Masters" stories), and the changing of a man into a werewolf, in "William and the Werewolf." The two first instances are part and parcel of the Arthurian cycle; the last is remotely ancient, as Mr. Baring-Gould's well-known work shows. Magic rings, weapons, and garments also occur. In "King Robert of Sicily" and "Sir Cleges and the Cherries," the wonderful events are ascribed, with much simple power and sincerity, to the Creator.

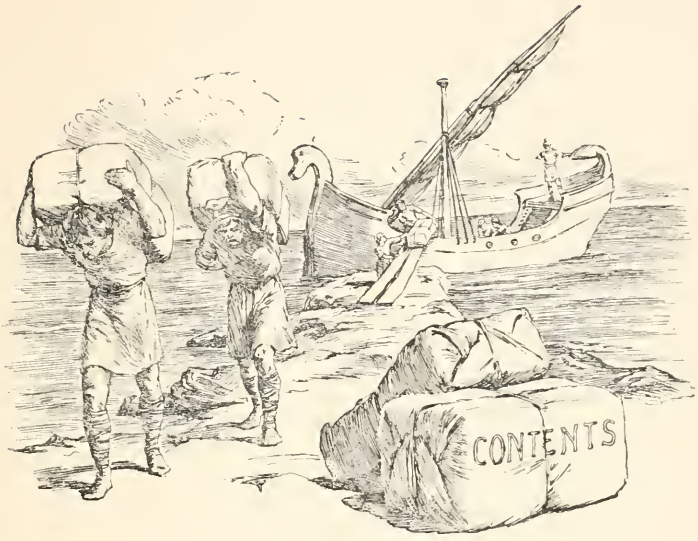
It is neither necessary nor possible to discuss here the dates of the original romances, or textual questions. The majority of the English texts, in the form in which we have them, probably belong to the early fourteenth century; one or two, possibly, almost touch Chaucer's own lifetime. The serious investigation of such matters can only be undertaken with the aid of the whole-hearted and painstaking publications of the Early English Text Society, and similar societies, to whose notes, glossaries, and introductions every student owes an incalculable debt. The pedigree of the stories themselves, as stories, is also a matter of long research, though of wide general interest. Many of the ideas are almost as old as mankind; they have their roots deep in folk-lore and obscure history. "The Ash and the Hazel," for instance, contains the elemental parts of "Patient Griselda." "The Knight and the Greyhound," in "The Seven Wise Masters," is but the tale of Llewellyn and Gelert. "The Thief and his Son" goes back at least as far as the days when Herodotus learnt all about Egypt from his dragoman,

though the mystery of Rhampsinitus' treasure-house has lost some valuable details during the ages. "Havelok the Dane" may contain a fair element of truth in the account of the foundation of Grimsby. In the details of "Guy of Warwick," "William and the Werewolf," and the tales into which Saracens enter, there is obviously the remnant, dim and perverted, of genuine tradition.

But if the stories have an immemorial past, they have also, in many cases, a life extending far later than the time when our present texts took shape. I have before me as I write an old chap-book of about 1800, dirty, badly printed, written in execrable English. It is "The History of Guy, Earl of Warwick," in prose, as it was set before children and ignorant persons for many generations. The chief incident in it is Guy's return to Felice, of which a woodcut is given; the same block did duty for a dozen similar interviews in other tales. Next in importance comes the slaying of a "huge and monsterous boar," which is so irrelevant and tedious in the original rhymed text that in my version I have given it but passing mention. To such a pass had the old "romance of price" come: abridged, mutilated, shorn of all mediæval feeling, unreverenced, it had become in the eighteenth century, like many of its fellows, the treasure of the nursery. There was no longer in it "mirth and solace" for a simple, rough, knightly court; better poetry had brought its doggerel rhyme into contempt, better stories had caused it to be classed among the meaner productions of that printer's art which had

grown up since its day. But it still lingered on obscurely. It had become one of the traditions of England, of Europe itself, and could not die altogether. Even when there are no local associations, as at Warwick and Grimsby and Arundel (where Bevis's grave is still shown), to keep the legends fresh in the memory of men, they have endured, passing, perhaps, into other forms, or living, it may be, only in the inspiration they have given to some chance reader. They were not great poetry. They were but the quarry from which greater poets extracted the pure metal. But they still contain, with all their imperfections, stories almost inherent in man's nature, pictures of ideals long forgotten, and the record of an age when romance, perhaps, was a thing of greater "price" than now.

F. J. HARVEY DARTON.



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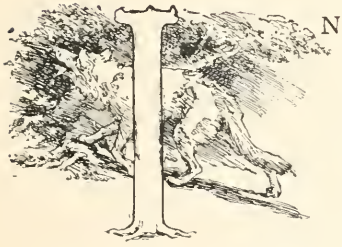
A Wonder Book of Old Romance

William and the Werewolf

I. William the Cowherd



IN the old days there lived in Apulia a King named Embrons, with his wife Felice. He ruled prosperously and well, and under him all men were content.

Embrons and Felice had one son, whom they christened William. This child would one day be King of Apulia, for he was the King's sole heir; and great care was taken to keep him in health, and to bring him up as became a young prince. But a brother of Embrons, being next in succession to the throne after William, plotted many times to take his life, and perchance would have succeeded, but for what came to pass when the child was four years old.

King Embrons and all his court at a certain season of the year went to Palermo (for Sicily also was part of his dominions), where they feasted and made merry.

There was near the royal palace a large, fair orchard, where often the King and his company took their pleasure. As they walked there one day, William was playing on the grass beside them, and gathering flowers, when suddenly a huge wolf leapt among the folk. His jaws were agape, his eyes glaring, and he sprang forward like a whirlwind. Before any one could stop him, he had seized William in his mouth, and sprang away as silently and swiftly as he had come.

(Now this wolf, you must know, was a werewolf, with a man's soul under his wolf's hide. He was of noble birth, being no less than Alfonso, the King of Spain's son. When he was yet young, his mother died, and the King his father before long married again. His second wife was Braunden, daughter of the King of Portugal. She was very skilled in magic and the black art, and when she saw that her stepson was so dear to his father that he would be King after him, rather than her own son, she cast about to do hurt to him. She made an ointment of great strength, full of enchantments, and anointed her stepson therewith. Immediately he was turned into a wolf, with all his man's wits the same as before, but clad outwardly with shaggy hair. He knew that the change came through his stepmother, and sprang at her, and well nigh strangled her; but help came speedily to her, and the werewolf was driven forth. Fast away he fled into far-off lands, and journeyed many days till he came to Apulia, where on a sudden he was moved to carry off William, as we have seen.)

Embrons made a great hue and cry after the were-

wolf, and men pursued the beast for many leagues. But he ran with exceeding swiftness, despite the weight of the child in his mouth, and speedily outdistanced them all. On and on he went, till he reached the Straits of Messina; he plunged boldly into the sea, and swam across the Straits, and came safely to the mainland. Still he ran on, without ceasing to rest, on and on till he came to a great forest near Rome. There he laid the child down, and made as it were a burrow for it: in a little bank overhung by trees he scraped away the earth with his paws, until he had dug a long cave or passage, wherein he put ferns and grass to make a soft bed for his captive. On it he set the child, and there they tarried for many days. The werewolf lay close to William, and fondled him tenderly, and brought him food, doing him no hurt.

In that forest where the werewolf had made his den, there dwelt an old churl, a cowherd, who for many winters had kept men's kine there. It chanced that one day he led his herd to pasture close to the den. With him came his hound, who was wont to marshal the herd for him; and while the kine fed the cowherd sat contentedly on the green sward, clouting his shoes, the dog beside him, scarce a furlong away from where William lay.

The werewolf had gone forth to seek prey, whereon to feed himself and William. The child, already grown stout and strong for his age, sat near the mouth of the den. Outside all was green shade and sunlight; the trees were in full leaf, birds sang merrily, and

many a fair flower shone in the grass. Presently William came a little way out of the burrow, and picked the flowers, and sat listening to the birds' song.

Suddenly he looked up and saw the cowherd's dog close to him. At the same moment the dog saw him, and began to bark and bay loudly. William set up a great crying, and the noise of the two brought the cowherd running to the spot. There before him, as he came up, he saw his hound barking furiously at a little child clad only in a shirt of fine linen, sitting at the mouth of what seemed the burrow of some wild animal.

The cowherd called his hound off angrily, and holding it in, came towards William with friendly looks and gentle words. Soon he overcame the child's fears, and took him in his arms and kissed him. Then he set out straightway for his home with William, the dog running beside them.

"Wife," said the cowherd when he came to his cottage, "I have found this child in the forest, in a wild beast's den. Let us take him in, and care for him as if he were our own."

"Gladly, goodman," she answered, and turned to the child; "what is your name, dear child?" she asked.

"William," answered he.

"Then, William," said she, "you shall be our child, for we have none, and we will keep you in all love."

So the cowherd and his wife brought William up in their cottage. He grew into a strong lad, fair to look on, active and hardy through his life in the fields with the poor cowherd. He learnt to run and leap, and to shoot well with the bow; and many a coney and hare,

"The cowherd came towards William with friendly looks and gentle words."

many a fieldfare and pheasant did he catch in snares when he went out to tend the cattle in the forest. He was beloved by all who knew him (for there were other herdsmen and peasants and farmers dwelling near the forest), and grew up full of manly courage and spirits.

But the werewolf, when he came back to his den on the day when the cowherd found William, was sad and sorrowful to see it empty. He roared aloud in his grief, and rent his hide. But soon he cast about to find where William had gone, and he came upon the cowherd's tracks. He followed them away from the den to the cottage, and he guessed that the man had carried off William. All round the cottage he looked, but saw nought, until he found a crevice in the wall. He peered through, and saw inside the cowherd's wife fondling and petting the child. Then he was blithe and gay for the child's sake, for he knew that all was well with it; and he went away with a glad heart, purposing only to watch over William from a distance, for he loved the child, and would fain keep him always from harm.

When William was well-nigh full grown, it came to pass that the Emperor of Rome hunted in the forest; and as he chased a great boar, he became separated from his men, and at last missed his way altogether. He rode along seeking to find a path out of the forest. Suddenly he saw before him a werewolf, which was pursuing a hart that ran on far ahead. At that sight the Emperor was filled anew with desire for the chase, and he in turn pursued the werewolf.

Onwards they raced, the Emperor neither gaining nor losing ground; ever and anon the werewolf looked back, as if he knew he was followed. The hart was often out of sight, and indeed it seemed to the Emperor as though there were but one chase—his chase of the werewolf, who led him, as it were, whithersoever it pleased to go.

Suddenly the werewolf sprang aside and vanished into a thicket; and when the Emperor came to the spot, there was no trace of the beast to be seen. He cast his eyes all round, and in a moment he was aware of a lad coming towards him through the forest, as though this were a place where the werewolf knew they would meet.

The Emperor looked at the youth. He was well-built and comely, and bore himself with such grace that he seemed almost of fairy lineage, so fair was he.

"Greeting, my lord," said he courteously.

"Greeting," said the Emperor. "I am lost in this forest. Tell me your name, I pray you, and your parentage."

"I will tell you, sir, since you ask it," said the lad. "I am called William. A cowherd of this country is my kind father, and my mother is his wife. They have fostered me and fed me well all my days, and I keep the kine here for them. No more of my kindred do I know than that."

When the Emperor heard those words, he marvelled that so comely a lad should be a cowherd s son.

"Go, call this cowherd," he said. "I would speak with him."

"Nay, sir," said William, "you are a great lord, and may perchance mean him some evil. No hurt shall come to him through me."

"Bring him hither, I say," said the Emperor; "no harm shall come to him, but rather advantage."

"I trust your word, sir," answered William, "I will go."

He went speedily and found the cowherd. "My father," he said, "a great lord is yonder, and would fain speak with you. I pray you go to him, lest he be angered."

"What, son," said the cowherd, "did you tell him I was here, near by?" For he feared lest some hard service might be asked of him, on pain of punishment.

"Yes, certes," answered William. "But he vowed that he meant you no harm."

The cowherd grumbled, but went with William to the Emperor.

"This is my father, my lord," said William; and the cowherd did a reverence humbly.

"Cowherd," said the Emperor, "have you ever seen the Emperor of Rome?"

"Nay, my lord, never in my life."

"Know then that I am he. I would fain ask you a certain question; I conjure you, answer me truly. Tell me whether this lad is your child, or does he come of other kin?"

The cowherd knew not the reason of the question, but he began to tremble, and fear exceedingly, lest he should perchance be charged with having stolen William from his parents, whoever they might be.

"I will tell you truly, sire," he said at length. "The boy is not my son." And he rehearsed how he had found William in the forest many years before, clad only in a little shirt of fine linen.

"I thank you for telling me the truth," said the Emperor, when he had heard all the tale. "You shall not suffer for it. Now hear me. My heart is very fain to have this boy at Rome; he shall go with me, and dwell at my court."

Sad and sorry was the cowherd when he heard that word, for he loved William dearly. But he must not refuse, for William was not his son, and he had no power to keep him.

When William heard that the cowherd was not his father, and that he would be taken from him, he began to weep and lament. "Alas, I know nought of my birth," he said; "I am no man's son, and have no kin. I am much beholden to this cowherd and his wife, who have cared for me; and I love them truly. But I cannot repay their kindness, for I have neither kith nor kin. I am nothing in the world."

"Be still, boy," quoth the Emperor; "cease your sorrow. At Rome you shall be treated well, and will come into honour and esteem, so that you can requite your friends. Now, cowherd, help him to mount my horse in front of me, and we will ride to Rome."

"Farewell, dear father," cried William to the good cowherd. "Greet well my dear foster-mother, and may you both live happily and long."

Then the Emperor rode away, and the cowherd went home sorrowfully.

Before they had ridden far, William and the Emperor came upon some of the huntsmen. All the Emperor's company marvelled at the comeliness of the lad, and when they rode back to Rome, the whole court was amazed at his fairness.

The Emperor had a daughter named Melior, of the same age as William, and full lovely to look upon. To her he gave William for a page, telling her the whole story of his birth, and bidding her care for him well, for it was likely that he was of good birth, from his seemly manners and his lusty frame; and Melior gladly took William for a page, and clad him richly, and treated him with all honour and courtesy.

II. The Emperor's Daughter and the Page

William busied himself in serving Melior well and truly. He soon learnt all that behoves a page, and began to have a great skill in arms and at jousting, until before long there were none at the Emperor's court so free and debonair as he. Often did Melior cast her eyes upon him and admire him; and at last she found that she was deep in love with him.

When she perceived this, and remembered that, for all his comeliness, William was but a page in her father's service, she fell in great sorrow, and began to pine and grow ill. Many an hour did she spend lamenting her love in secret, and weeping and wondering whether she should not tell William, until she became so pale and wan that Alexandrine, her cousin and favourite handmaid, asked her what ailed her.

"Tell me the cause of your illness, dear lady," said Alexandrine. "What is your grief? I am your cousin, and you know full well that you can trust me with your secrets."

"Dear cousin," answered Melior, "I thank you for your comfort. I will tell you the truth. I love William, and think upon him so often that every man who speaks to me seems to be he. Give me good counsel, dear Alexandrine, how shall I quell this love?"

Alexandrine marvelled greatly, but she gave her friend comfort. "I will find you a certain herb which will cure you," she said. "You will like well the sweetness of it."

"Get me this herb, dear cousin, as quickly as may be."

Alexandrine went from her, and racked her brain to find a plan to bring her wiie to pass; for she knew no healing herb save William himself, whom she purposed to tell of Melior's love. She was skilled in weaving spells and enchantments, and before long she gained her end in this wise. By magic arts she caused William to dream that Melior came to him and said, "Dear William, I love you truly; kiss me;" and so real did this dream seem to William that he woke to find himself kissing his pillow as if it had been Melior herself.

"What is this?" he said to himself when he was fully awake. "I could have been sure that my lady Melior was here. How fair she seemed! How sweetly did she look upon me! I vow I love her more than any lady in the world."

The more he thought of this dream, the more deeply he came to love Melior, until at length he became as love-sick as she was. Yet he durst say nothing to her, for she was a princess, and he but a page whose birth no man knew. Often he pondered his fate, and grieved that he could not even tell Melior of his love. The image of Melior was ever before his eyes, and he would go and sit in a garden beneath her chamber window, under an apple tree, for hours, watching the window and thinking only of his love. Every day he was to be found there, gazing up, saying nought.

It chanced that Alexandrine learnt of this custom of his, and was minded to make use of it. She watched him there daily, though he saw her not; and at last she obtained her desire, for William fell asleep in the garden, weary with long watching.

"Dear lady," she said to Melior, "let us go into the garden. There we shall see many fair flowers, and hear the merry song of birds, and have much comfort. Perchance I may find there that herb of which I spoke to you."

They went with other maidens into the fair garden, wherein grew all manner of lovely flowers, and birds sang sweetly for joy in the spring; but nought could make Melior glad. She sat down under a sycamore tree, heavy at heart, and thought of her love for William.

Alexandrine wandered a little from her. But anon she came running back, as if in great surprise and wonder. "Madame, there is a man asleep here," she cried. "Whether he be knight or squire I know not,

for I cannot see his face; but he is a comely body to look on. Come hither and see him."

Melior rose and went towards the apple tree, under which William lay sleeping. She saw in a moment who he was, and she would fain have kissed him, but durst not, for fear some one should see her and spread a tale about her.

As she looked, Alexandrine, by her enchantment, caused William to dream again; and he dreamed that Melior herself brought him a fair rose, and he took it readily, and in a trice was healed of his love-sickness.

Thus he dreamed; and in the midst of it he awoke and saw Melior herself standing at his side, and speaking words which she deemed unheard.

"Sweet love," he heard her saying, "Heaven give you joy."

"Dear Lady Melior," he said, starting up, "was it I whom you called sweet love?"

"Even so, William," she answered, seeing that her love was no longer hidden from him.

"Said I not, Lady Melior," said Alexandrine, "that in this garden you would find the herb to cure your sickness?"

"You said it," answered Melior; "I am cured."

There and then William and Melior plighted their troth; but they agreed to keep their love secret until William could win high rank for himself by deeds of valour, for they knew that the Emperor would be wroth if he heard that William, a foundling, dared to love his daughter.

"She would fain have kissed him, but durst not."

Before long there came a chance for William to win fame in arms. The Duke of Saxony marched against Rome with a great host of men, and the Emperor was forced to summon all his vassals to defend his city. When William heard of the war, he was blithe and glad, and went to the Emperor and besought him to dub him knight, that he might do battle against Rome's enemies. The Emperor granted his boon, and William bore arms against the Saxons. Many feats of might did he do, and often did his courage turn a doubtful battle, and at last he took the Duke of Saxony prisoner with his own hand; so that, when the wars were ended, and the Saxons were driven from the lands of Rome, William was fain to tell the Emperor of his love for Melior, who had heard of his doughty deeds with joy and gladness.

But ere he could say or do ought, an ill chance turned all their plans to nothing.

After the war against the Saxons, the Emperor held a great feast, to which all his nobles and knights came, William among them. As they made merry, the doors of the hall were suddenly thrown open, and thirty men, bravely apparelled in cloth of gold and fine linen, were ushered in; they greeted the Emperor, and when he had asked their business, a certain lord among them, Roachas by name, spoke in answer.

"Lord Emperor," he said, "the good Emperor of Greece sends you greeting and friendship by us his messengers. He says to you that he has a dear son, a man well tried in all doughty deeds, who will be Emperor after him. He has often heard tell of your

fair daughter the lady Melior, and would fain ask her hand in marriage for his son. If you will give her, she shall have in Greece more gold than you have silver, and more proud cities and seemly castles than you have small towns or mean houses. What is your will, sire? All your lords are here with you, and you can take counsel with them, and give us an answer speedily."

Thus they spoke; and, to be short, the Emperor consented to give Melior to the Prince of Greece. The marriage was to be held at Midsummer, it being then Easter-tide; and at Midsummer the Emperor of Greece and his son would come to Rome for the wedding.

When Melior and William heard these tidings they were utterly downcast; all their plans had failed, and it seemed that Melior would be forced to go to Greece. No device could they think of to escape this wedding, until at last, when the Emperor of Greece was already come to Rome, and the streets were strewn with roses, and the city echoed with mirth and minstrelsy, they besought Alexandrine to help them.

"I know no plan," said she at first, weeping sore for their sad plight. "You cannot escape from Rome or the country round, for when they found that you were gone, they would raise a hue and cry; each bridge and pass would be closely guarded, so that neither clerk, nor knight, nor country churl would escape unseen."

But in a little while she spoke again. "There is one way, as it seems to me. The men in the Em-

peror's kitchen here every day flay many beasts—hinds and harts, bucks and bears, for meat. Now if you were to wear two of the skins they cast aside, and creep away in them as secretly as may be, perchance you might be taken for beasts, and so escape. Of all beasts, bears seem to me the best for this purpose, for they are grisly and terrible, and men shrink from the sight of them, and do not look too closely at them. If we could by craft obtain two bears' skins, then might your purpose be fulfilled."

Melior and William were filled with joy at this plan, and begged Alexandrine to procure the bearskins for them. But that was no easy matter, and she could only get them by disguising herself as a kitchen-boy, and doing menial work in the Emperor's kitchen, and stealing thence the skins of two white bears.

She brought the skins to Melior and William, and dressed them in them, sewing them over their clothes.

"How like you me now?" asked Melior, when her bearskin was cunningly fitted on. "Am I not a fine bear?"

"Yes, madame, you are as grisly a sight as man could wish to see. You are a very wild bear to look on."

And when William was sewn into his skin, even Melior could scarce look on him without terror, so like a bear did he seem.

That evening, as it grew dusk, the two bears crept quietly out of the Emperor's palace into a garden, and Alexandrine, having bidden them farewell and wished them god-speed, let them out at a little postern-

gate. Away they ran, on two legs when they were alone, on four whensoever they came near other folk; and so they fled out into the night together, away from Rome.

But they were not unseen, though they knew not that any one was watching them. A certain Greek chanced to be resting in the garden, hidden by the shady trees. Suddenly he saw two white bears steal hurriedly across the grass, and disappear in the direction of the garden wall. Half out of his wits with fear, he fled into the palace, and when he found some of his comrades, told them what he had seen. But they only laughed at his story, and did not believe him. They said that he had fallen asleep, and had dreamed about two bears; and seeing that no one put faith in his words, he himself came to think that it was a dream, until later he had cause to change his mind.

III. The Two Bears

Melior and William hastened away, and journeyed all night. By morn they had come to a great forest, and finding in it a little cave, they rested there, for they did not wish to travel by day, lest they should be seen. They were very weary, but thankful to have escaped, though before long hunger made them forget all else.

"Would that we knew how to get food, dear love," said William. "If we do not, I fear we may die of hunger."

"Nay, by your leave, William," answered Melior,

"I think we can live well on love alone, if God helps us to find a few berries; bullaces and blackberries, hips and haws, acorns, hazel-nuts, and other fruits grow on the trees in this forest, and with them and our love to sweeten them, we may well be content."

"Nay, dear, you have never known hardship. You must fare better than that. I will go forth and see if I can find any wayfarer, some churl, or perchance a chapman coming from market or fair; from him, if he have any, I will take meat and drink. Else shall we both lose our lives through hunger."

"Go not forth, William, I pray you. If you took ought from any man, he would raise a hue and cry, and carry the news to Rome, and we should come to harm. It is better for us to abide here and live on whatever fruits we can find in the forest."

So they picked berries and fruits, and abode there in the forest, in dire straits, but well content with one another's love.

But help was nigh, though they knew it not. The werewolf had long remained near Rome, hearing tidings of William from passers by; and he had seen William and Melior steal away, clad in bearskins. He had followed them to the forest, and overheard all their talk; and when he saw their sorry plight, he hastened away to find them food.

It was not long before he came upon what he wanted. A man passed near carrying bread and beef in a great wallet. With a loud roar the werewolf sprang out at him, and made as if to tear him to pieces. The man dropped his wallet and fled for his life, never doubting

that he would be caught and devoured in a trice. But the good werewolf cared nothing for the man; he only had need of his wallet, which he seized and carried off in his mouth.

William and Melior were eating their poor meal of nuts and berries when they heard a pattering and rustling in the forest near them. They looked up and saw coming towards them a great wolf, bearing in its mouth a wallet.

Melior clung to William in terror; but William saw that the wolf was gentle and meant no harm to them. He said no word as the animal drew near. It came right up to them and laid the wallet at their feet; then it turned and bounded out of sight again.

William wondered much at this strange hap. He picked up the wallet and opened it: in it he saw the bread and beef.

"Lo, dear love," he said gaily, "see what great grace God has showed us. He has sent us meat to succour us in our sore need. Never saw I such a wonder as that a wolf should bring food to us."

They fell to gladly, and ate the meat with no sauce but hunger. Suddenly the werewolf appeared again, carrying in his mouth two flagons of fine wine, which he had taken from a serving-man who was bearing them to a rich burgess of that country. He laid them before the two lovers, and again disappeared. But he did not go far off; that day and for many days more he remained near them, and brought them food for their needs each day. William had well-nigh forgotten the wolf in whose den he formerly lived, and he

"Carrying in his mouth two flagons of fine wine."

marvelled greatly at this strange companion: but he felt no fear of him.

Gay and blithe were William and Melior as they made merry over what the werewolf had brought them. When they had feasted well, they rested till nightfall, and then set forth on their journey again, the werewolf following close behind, yet unseen.

Meanwhile at Rome the preparations for the wedding of Melior to the Prince of Greece went forward apace. The wedding-day itself (it was the day after William and Melior had fled) came, and all Rome was full of mirth and minstrelsy. But when the appointed hour drew nigh, Melior had not yet appeared. The Emperor sent a baron to bid her come, and he went to her chamber, but found no one there. Then the Emperor himself came. But Melior was not to be seen. He questioned Alexandrine straitly. But Alexandrine said that she had not seen Melior since midnight; she knew that the Princess was loth to wed the Prince of of Greece, and that she loved William in her heart; but more than that she could not say.

Search was made everywhere, but they found no sign of Melior, nor could William be discovered. It was clear that they had fled together.

"Alas, that traitrous foundling has betrayed me," said the Emperor. "I brought him up and cared for him as well as any in the land, and now he is false to me. The Greeks will make war on me if Melior does not wed their Prince. I am utterly undone."

He held a great council straightway. His lords advised him to tell the Emperor of Greece all that

had befallen, and ask his grace and pardon; and the Emperor did so with great sorrow and humility.

The Emperor of Greece was wroth, but restrained his anger. He counselled that proclamation should be made throughout the dominions of Rome that every man should immediately search for William and Melior. Every pass and bridge and road was to be guarded; if any man were slothful or careless in his watch he should be hanged, while whosoever found William and Melior should receive great rewards.

It was done as he said. But all the search was in vain, until, hearing the proclamation, the Greek who had seen the two bears in the Castle garden told of what he had seen The skins in the Emperor's kitchen were counted; two white bearskins were found to be missing. It was plain that William and Melior had fled in them.

There was a great hue and cry set on foot. Huntsmen and hounds went forth as if in search of real bears. All the land was scoured high and low for William and Melior.

But the werewolf did not desert his charge. The hunt came nigh the two bears, and was close upon their heels; but the werewolf left them and faced the hounds and huntsmen, so that they turned aside to pursue him. Over hill and dale and marsh they ran after him, and always he kept ever so little ahead of them. Far away did he lead them from William and Melior, who pushed on their road with all speed and came at length into Apulia, where they rested.

Anon the Greeks and Romans, wearied with

pursuing the werewolf in vain, gave up the chase and returned to Rome, to wait for tidings of the white bears. The werewolf, as soon as they were gone, hasted across country in the track of William and Melior, and came up with them near the strong walled city of Benevento; and all three lay hid in a cave in a quarry nearly dry under a high hill, the werewolf under a crag at the entrance, ever alert to watch for danger

Hardly had they rested a few hours when certain workmen came to the quarry to dig stone. One of them wandered nigh the cave, and peering in from a little distance saw therein two seemly white bears. Straightway he called to mind the cry that had been sent through all the country concerning two white bears; and he ran swiftly to his comrades.

"Hearken now, friends," he said, "you are mindful of the cry about two bears, and the reward that was to be given to him who found them?"

"We know it full well," said they; "what of it?"

"I will tell you how to win that reward," he answered. "I know where the two white bears are."

"Tell us straightway," they cried. "We are not afraid of two bears. Where are they?"

"In yonder cave they lie. Now hark you; we will do this all in order, lest we fail to catch the bears and to win the reward. I will go to the Provost of Benevento and tell him all, so that he may come hither with officers and a host of men, lest the bears escape. Do you abide here and watch the cave, that they go not forth."

"Be it so," they said. "See that you lose no time in going to Benevento."

The man hastened to Benevento and called the Provost; and the Provost, mindful of the Emperor's proclamation, summoned all the men of the city, a great host, well nigh two thousand strong. They set out for the quarry in high hope of capturing the bears. With them went the women and children of Benevento, to watch what befel; and among the children was the little son of the Provost, a fair boy well known and loved by all the citizens.

William and Melior were resting in the cave. Suddenly the werewolf pricked up his ears. A confused noise sounded outside. They looked out, and beheld the Provost of Benevento and a host of men surrounding the cave.

"Alas! our end is come," said William. "Woe is me that I have brought you to this pass, dear Melior. But I will take on me all the harm. Do you take off your bearskin, and show them that you are a woman; then will they do you no hurt. I will abide their anger as I am, and perchance when they have taken me and slain me their wrath will be turned aside. Ah, if I had a horse and armour I would not yield easily!"

"What, William, do you think I would live if you were dead?" answered Melior. "Whatsoever fate befalls you, that also will I readily suffer."

The Provost and his men began to draw near the mouth of the cave. But the werewolf was on the watch. Suddenly he rushed forth with a loud roar,

scattering those who were nearest; in a trice he had leapt upon the Provost's little son, playing idly with the other children, and ran off with him before the men knew what had come to pass.

"Help, good men," cried the Provost, as he saw his son borne away in the mouth of the fierce wolf, who roared savagely as he darted swiftly away. "After him, ere he can gain his den, or my son is lost!"

Thereat the citizens turned from the cave's mouth, and set themselves to hunt the werewolf with hound and horn and great clamour. The werewolf led them afar to the mountains, ever keeping beyond their reach: if they fell too far behind, he waited until they grew closer, and then led them on as before. All day he ran, doing no hurt to the child; and they pursued till every thought of the bears was almost forgotten.

When William and Melior saw that the folk were all gone from outside the cave, they knew that the werewolf had saved them again; and they fell on their knees and prayed to God to keep him safe. Then they set about fleeing again themselves. They were sure now that their bearskins were known to all men as a disguise, and it seemed best to cast them off, and go thence in their own clothes.

They stripped off the skins, and stood upright in their own clothes, blithe and gay to see one another in a true guise. Then they set forth a-wandering once more, taking with them the bearskins in case they should need them again. For many miles they fled, until, weary and hungry, they lay down to rest in a great forest.

Meanwhile the werewolf, having led the Provost and his men a sorry dance all day, perceived that he had gone far enough. About sunset he ran well ahead of his pursuers, and laid the child carefully down, unharmed, on the ground. Then he darted off, freed of his burden, and was gone in a trice.

When the Provost came up, he found the child unhurt, and gave thanks to Heaven. Then, seeing that it was vain to pursue the wolf further, he bade his tired men go home. That night, sore, wearied, they rested in Benevento. On the morrow they rose betimes, and went to the quarry to see if they could catch the white bears. But they found the bears gone, and there was no trace of them to be seen : no man had spied a white skin anywhere. So the men of Benevento, having made one more great search in all the country round, gave up the attempt to find the white bears.

Melior and William were sitting in the forest, on the morning after their flight from the quarry, when the werewolf suddenly appeared, hastening on their track of the day before, as if eager to come up with them. In his mouth he bore great store of meat and drink for them. But when he had laid his burden before them, he departed again.

"In truth, Melior," said William, "this is no common wolf. He has man's nature; a man's wits are in him. See what he suffers to bring us out of harm; never does he fail to aid us, though it be at the peril of his life."

"I trow he must be a man in wolf's guise," answered Melior.

As they spoke they heard voices coming close to them. They crouched down in the long grass and bracken till they were quite hidden.

The voices drew nearer. They came from some charcoal-burners working not far away.

"Would that those white bears were here now," said one. "All the men in the world should not save them from us if they were. They are no bears, but the Emperor's daughter and some knight who is fleeing with her. A wolf saved them yesterday when the Provost of Benevento thought to take them; but if they were here now, not fourscore wolves should save them."

Melior was nigh mad with fear at those words; but she lay still, and they were not yet seen.

"Bah, friend," said another charcoal-burner, "go you about your appointed work. What if the bears were here? What good would it do to take them? Many a hard hap have they escaped; may they come free out of many another, say! Let us to work, and do our own business, and win some money for ourselves thereby, instead of looking for white bears."

They passed on, and Melior and William were out of peril again. But they saw from the first man's words that they were known for the princess and a knight, so that even without the bearskins they would be recognised.

"I know not what we must do," said Melior. "We shall be known however we are clad."

Even as she spoke a huge hart, with a hind in its train, burst through the forest in a panic. Hard on the heels of the beasts flew the werewolf, and, almost as they passed before William and Melior, he caught them up and in a trice slew them. He stood over the dead bodies for a minute, looking stedfastly at his friends, as if he would tell them something. Then he turned, and trotted a little way into the forest.

"Never saw any man a wolf like this," said William. "What would he have us do with this hart and this hind that he has slain before our very eyes?"

"I know not," answered Melior.

"Perchance they are for another disguise," said William, when he had pondered the strange chance. "If I were to flay these beasts, we could wrap ourselves in their skins, and so be unknown once more."

"Dear William," cried Melior, "that is clearly the wolf's intent."

William set to work and speedily flayed the dead beasts. Then he prepared the skins, and before long they two, who formerly had seemed to be bears, wore the guise of hart and hind.

When they were arrayed in their new garments, the werewolf came to them again; and going before them, he led them by devious ways through Apulia and Calabria, and sought to reach Sicily, whither, though the hue and cry once more began to grow hot behind them, no man durst follow them, for the island was at that time ravaged by a great war, that raged furiously and made all things unsafe.

But it was no easy matter to cross the Straits of

Messina into Sicily, for they could not seek a ship openly. When they came to the port of Reggio, they lay hid near the haven till it was night and all men were asleep. Then they crept hastily down to the haven, and stealthily went to and fro, looking for a ship which should be made ready as if to sail at once. Soon they found one, loaded with great tuns of wine, and about to sail. The crew were all asleep or in the town enjoying themselves; and the werewolf led William and Melior on board without being seen. They went quietly down to the hold and hid themselves behind the great wine-barrels.

Presently the men came aboard, and, the wind being favourable, they set sail, and before long drew near the coast of Sicily.

But though they were well-nigh across the Straits in safety, the fugitives had yet to leave the ship without being seen.

The werewolf contrived a plan. As the ship neared land, he rushed out from their hiding-place, and sprang over the side. The men, in alarm at seeing the great beast in their midst, struck at him with oars and staves as he passed, and one of them hit him a shrewd blow; but he heeded it not, but leapt into the water and swam swiftly to land. The sailors hastily got out a little boat, and rowed after him; some in their eagerness jumped overboard and swam in pursuit. In a few moments all were gone but a little bare-legged boy.

William and Melior heard the noise on deck as the werewolf went away from them. Then came a great

quiet. The ship seemed to be deserted. They crept out from behind the wine-tuns, and went stealthily up to the deck. There was only a boy there.

But the boy saw them, and in great terror seized a staff that lay by and swung it round wildly. It chanced to strike Melior as she was near the edge of the ship; and at the blow she lost her balance, and fell overboard.

William leapt after her in a trice, and came to her aid. She was not hurt, and together they swam to land, and, when they had reached the shore, ran swiftly inland, away from the ship.

The boy marvelled greatly at what he had seen. But he could do nought to catch the hart and the hind, for he might not leave the ship. Presently the crew came back, angry and weary, for they had pursued the werewolf a long way in vain. The boy told them what he had seen; but there was nothing which they could do now, for it was not safe for them to go far into Sicily, because of the great war. So they went to port with their cargo of wine, and sold it, and speedily forgot all about their strange passengers.

But William and Melior sped on their way as fast as might be, away from the Straits. Before long the werewolf found them, and led them through the deserted country (for it had been sorely handled by the fighting all over the island) till they came near Palermo. There he showed them a great park close under the city walls, and brought them food; and they rested in peace for a little, after their long flight.

IV. The Hart and the Two Hinds

William and Melior were now in the land of William's father, King Embrons, who formerly had reigned over Apulia and Calabria and Sicily itself. But Embrons was dead, and his Queen Felice reigned alone, since no sign of William had been seen since the werewolf had carried him off so long ago. With her dwelt her daughter Florence, as fair a maid as any man might wish to see. It was for the sake of Florence that war was being waged; for the King of Spain (the father of the werewolf, though none but the wicked Queen Braunden knew it) had sought her in marriage for his second son, Braundinis, and Queen Felice had refused to give her. Whereupon Spain made war, and laid Sicily waste from end to end, and pressed Felice so hard that she was besieged in the strong city of Palermo.

The siege was very close and strict. It seemed certain that ere long the Spaniards must take the city. Certain of the Queen's captains were for yielding without more ado. But Felice was of a bold heart, and would never surrender while there were still men to fight. She bade them go about their business and quit themselves like men.

Herself she went to plead to God for help in her great straits. Long and earnestly did she pray, and at the end rose up comforted and went to rest.

As she lay asleep she dreamed. She seemed to see herself and Florence in the park that lay just outside

the city walls; and they were girt about by an hundred thousand leopards and bears and all manner of beasts, in great peril of being devoured. On a sudden, just as the beasts would have fallen upon them, there appeared a werewolf and two white bears. As they drew near, the white bears changed into deer, and each of them had on his forehead a fair figure. On the greater of the two was the figure of such a knight as her own son William should have been; on the lesser, there was the figure of a fair maiden. Crowns were on their heads, of gold set with precious gems, bright and shining. With the werewolf they set upon the host of wild beasts, and tore and bit and drave them before them, taking the largest of them prisoner, and putting the rest of them to headlong flight far over dale and down.

The dream faded into another, wherein the Queen saw herself in her Castle: she went up to the highest tower of it, and looked all round, and stretched out her arms over the country that lay beneath; and lo, one arm stretched till it was over Spain, and the other covered Rome; and at that she awoke.

She went to a learned man in her Castle, and told him all that she had dreamed.

"Madam, mourn no more," he said; "these visions are of good import. The beasts that beset you are those men who now besiege you. The hart and the bear signify certain knights who will come to your aid and deliver you. One shall capture the King of Spain and his son, and afterwards will be King of

this realm; and one shall deliver the King of Spain, and through him you shall learn tidings of the son you have lost for so long: that son shall one day be King of Rome, and your daughter shall be given to the King of Spain's son, but not to that son who now wars against you."

The Queen wept for joy at this good prophecy, and thanked the wise man. Then she went to her chamber and looked out from it over the park which she had seen in her dream. As she looked, her dream seemed to come true before her very eyes. There in the park, under a laurel tree in a green place, she saw the hart and the hind close together. She could hear nought of their talk; but she watched their loving gestures for a long time, and was filled with a new hope at seeing the help promised by her dream thus close at hand.

That night the Queen's knights came to her and begged her to yield to the Spaniards; the walls were battered down, they said, and the city must fall right soon if no help came. But Felice bade them be of good cheer, for succour had been promised to her in a dream; if it came not, then would be the time to talk of yielding, and they went away vowing to fight valiantly yet a little while longer.

The next day the Queen looked out on the park again. There were the hart and the hind still. But the heat of the sun had cracked the skins they wore, and their clothes showed plainly underneath.

The Queen summoned the wise man to look out.

"Be no more in dismay, liege lady," he said, as

soon as he saw the two deer. "Here is your dream come true. You have heard of late of a great hue and cry concerning the Emperor of Rome's daughter and a knight who fled from Rome with her? These are they. That knight shall bring the war to an end, if you can but reach him and bring him hither."

"They would flee from me, I trow," said the Queen, "if I so much as went near them. How if I also were to don a deerskin, and go forth to them? Perchance, if they thought me a deer, they would not be afraid; and if they saw that the skin was but a disguise, they might still have no fear, for they would know that it meant no harm, but rather friendliness to them. I will do it. Go you now, and get me a hind's skin, and I will put it on."

It was done as she said, and before long she went forth to the park clad in the skin of a hind.

William and Melior held converse together, right glad to be no longer pursued; the werewolf had left them again, and they knew not where he was. Suddenly they saw coming towards them one arrayed like themselves in a deerskin. They knew not at first whether it were in truth a hind, or some mortal man in disguise.

"I think it must be indeed a hind," said William. "It shows no fear of us."

"Nay, I have no fear of you," said the Queen, for she heard his words; "I know who you are, and I am not afraid."

William marvelled at those words, and Melior trembled with fear. "I conjure you," said William,

"tell me without tarrying whether you, who say that you know who we are, are a good spirit or some fiend bent on evil."

"I am a creature like yourselves," answered the Queen full courteously: "never, I hope, shall evil come on you of my making. I am come hither to beg your help, and pray you for charity's sake to deliver me out of sore straits. It has been shown me in a dream that you can aid me. If you will but give me your help, you shall be King here all your life, and this maid shall be your Queen."

And she told them in what sorry case she lay because of the King of Spain and his men.

William was glad at heart when he heard that the Queen of that land was speaking to him: he knew that they would be safe with her, and that he might win honour in her service. Together all three went into the city, and doffed their deerskins. Then William chose for himself fair armour and stout arms from the Queen's armoury: on his shield he caused to be painted the device of a werewolf.

There was in the Queen's stable a horse of spirit and mettle, by name Saundbruel; formerly it had been King Embron's horse, but since he had died none had dared to mount it, or come nigh it, so fierce was its temper. But when William came to the stable to choose himself a horse, Saundbruel broke all his fastenings for joy, and neighed marvellously, for he knew that William was his dear lord's son.

When William heard the neigh and saw how eager the horse was, he besought the Queen to give it to him.

"It was my lord King Embron's horse," she answered. "It is the best horse I have, if only any man could ride it. If you can ride it, it is yours."

"Madam, I would fain have the horse," said William; and having put on his armour ready for the fray, he went to the stable again. As soon as the horse saw him, it leaped and pranced; and when he came nigh, it knelt on the ground gently with its forefeet, to be saddled, and showed such joy as could not be exceeded.

William mounted Saundbruel, and rode forth. All through the ranks of Queen Felice's men he passed, exhorting them to be of good cheer, and bidding them make ready for a bold sally out against the enemy, who had begun to attack more furiously than ever. When he had spoken to them all, he chose four hundred picked men, and caused the great gates of Palermo to be thrown open, and rode out to meet the Spaniards.

The Spaniards were three thousand strong, led by the King's high steward; but William cared little for their numbers. He set his men in orderly array, himself at their head. Over against them were drawn up the Spanish host, the steward on a noble steed riding in front with his squires, a stark and terrible man of great might.

When they were close William set his spear in rest to charge the steward, and the steward on his side made ready. They rode together alone before their men, and William struck so strong and true that he drove the Spaniard clean out of his saddle to the ground, where he fell and lay as dead as a door-nail.

"William set his spear in rest."

His squires bore the dead man away. Then the Queen's men and the Spaniards fell to with a will. Long and fiercely did they fight, and many a good warrior was struck down and rose no more. But William's might prevailed against the enemy, and when at last he slew the steward's nephew in single combat the Spaniards turned and fled. For five miles they were pursued, and many were taken prisoner; few escaped death or capture that day.

That evening a great feast was held in Palermo. After it the Queen sat talking with William and Melior in her chamber, looking over the park outside the city. As they held converse, they were aware of the werewolf in the park coming towards their window. When he was close beneath it, he looked up, and held up his forefeet together as if making some prayer; then he did them a reverence, and went thence swiftly.

The Queen marvelled greatly thereat. "Sir William," she said, "saw you the doings of that noble wolf, how he lifted up his fore-paws as if in prayer? What meant he by that sign?"

"I know not exactly, madam," answered William, "save that whenever this wolf appears he brings us good fortune."

"When I look on that wolf," said the Queen, "a great sorrow which once befel me comes to my mind. Many years ago I had a dear son, fair and seemly to look on, named William, even as you are. When he was but four years old, he was playing yonder in the park, when suddenly a great wolf broke from

the forest and carried him off before the very eyes of my lord the King and myself and all our court. Many miles was the wolf pursued, but he came to the Straits of Messina without being caught, and leapt therein, and was no more seen; and to this day we have heard nought of my son, save that two nights ago I dreamed a dream which a wise man has told me foretells the return of my son to me. But I think he must have been drowned when the wolf leapt into the sea with him."

William thought of his own upbringing. The cowherd, he knew, was not his father, but had found him at the mouth of some wild beast's den. What if he were this lost son of Queen Felice? But the Queen thought her son was drowned. Perchance he might have been saved; and if so—— But he knew that it was as yet idle to ponder such things, for there was no proof of his royal birth to be found.

"Dear lady," he said gently to Felice," I will be a son to you and stand by you at your need."

With that they talked no more of the matter, but supped with great mirth and comfort, and at nightfall went to bed much cheered by the victory over the Spaniards.

On the morrow the King of Spain vowed to avenge his steward's death. He set a great host in array, and put his own son, Braundinis, at its head, and bade him take William alive or dead.

William rode forth on Saundbruel, with six companies of picked men; and they dealt so mightily with the Spaniards that in a little time this second

host also was put to flight and utterly defeated; and William took Braundinis prisoner with his own hand.

That evening again there was great rejoicing in Palermo. But as the Queen sat at her window with Melior and William she was very sorrowful. She looked on William, and as she looked she thought that never had she seen any man so like that comely knight, her dear lord, King Embrons. At that thought she began to weep.

"Why make you such sorrow, madam?" asked William, when he saw her tears. "This is rather a day for rejoicing, since we have a second time defeated the Spaniards, and taken their King's son a prisoner."

"You say true, Sir William," answered Felice; "I do wrong to weep. But as I looked on you I called to mind my dear lord Embrons who is dead: you are like him in every part; you might almost be that son of ours who has so long been lost."

William marvelled greatly at her words, and thought again of his strange upbringing. But he said nought of it. "Madam, think no more of it," he answered the Queen. "King Embrons and his son without doubt are dead these many years past, and will never come back to you; make merry, therefore, over this present good fortune."

But the Queen felt in her heart that her son was still alive, and that William was he; no longer did she think he had been drowned in the Straits of Messina.

As they sat there, they saw the werewolf coming again across the park. He ran up to the window, and knelt low before them as courteously as might be; then he turned and went his way again.

"It is a vastly strange sight," said the Queen, "to see this comely wolf doing reverence to us. Would that we knew what he means thereby! I pray it may turn to good for us."

"Truly it will bring good, though I know not what it means," said William. "Did not good fortune come to us to-day, as it always has after the werewolf has appeared?"

Then they went to meat, and after that to bed, with merry cheer and hope in their hearts.

On the next day another great battle was fought. The King of Spain was furious that his son was captured and his steward slain, and his men put to flight. But he fared no better than they. Long and fierce was the fight. Many deeds of valour were done on both sides. But in the end William and his men prevailed, and William took the King prisoner.

And now Palermo was freed of its enemies, for the Spaniards had little heart for fighting when their King and his son were captured. The siege was ended, and and Queen Felice's dominions were rid of war and strife. Great was the rejoicing in the city. For many days there was nought but mirth and feasting; and at the end of it all a great council was held to decide the terms of peace between Queen Felice and Spain.

V. The Wolf Prince

At the great council Queen Felice sat in the midst on a daïs; on one side of her was the King of Spain, and on the other William, with Melior beside him. All the lords and burgesses of Apulia and Sicily and Spain were there gathered together; and the Princess Florence sat at the King's side.

"Queen Felice," said the King of Spain, when they were all assembled, "I pray you grant that I may see my son."

Braundinis was brought in. "See, my son," said his father, "what sorrow have we come to by obeying the Queen Braunden, your mother. She would have me seek the Princess Florence in marriage for you, and nought has come of it but woe to us all."

"We have done wrong, sire," answered Braundinis. "We must yield to the grace of Queen Felice, and let her do with us as seems good to her."

The King sighed for their sorry case. "Madam," he said to Felice, "let me make amends for the evil we have done in this war. I am ready to restore to you as much as any man may ordain to be right; all my power I will hold as from you, and be your vassal for the lands that are in my realm. If you like that not, I will be bound to you in any way that you will."

The Queen and her councillors began to hold converse concerning his words. Suddenly there came boldly into the hall the werewolf. He heeded none of the great lords there, but ran straightway to the

King of Spain, and knelt down at his feet and kissed them.

Then he saluted the Queen, and afterwards William and Melior, and turned and ran fast out of the hall.

Many men there drew their swords at the sight of him; and when he went out, they would fain have hastened after him and slain him. But William started up.

"Hold!" he cried. "If any man hurt that wolf, whosoever he be, I will kill him myself."

At those words none dared lift a hand to harm the wolf, for they were all in great dread of William's might.

But the King of Spain was sore troubled at the sight of the wolf, for there came to his mind a story he had heard concerning his lost son Alfonso, who Braunden had told him had been drowned by evil chance.

"Sir King," said William to him when the wolf was gone, "I conjure you to tell me why the wolf bowed himself before you and kissed your feet."

The King sighed sore. "Sir William," he answered, "this is the reason, I think, and sad I am at the thought. Many years ago I wedded a worshipful lady, a King's daughter; and she bore me a son, but alas, died at his birth. I had him nursed well, and he began to grow into a fair boy, strong and hardy; his name was Alfonso. But anon I married again, and Braunden, now my Queen, was my second wife. She bore Braundinis, this prince whom you have taken prisoner; and when Alfonso disappeared, being but three years of age, Braundinis became heir to my

kingdom of Spain. Alfonso, it was said by Queen Braunden, was drowned by chance. But I have heard from certain true men in Spain another story, and this wolf called it to mind. They said that by enchantments and magic arts, wherein she was mightily skilled, Braunden turned my son Alfonso into a werewolf, being jealous of him for Braundinis' sake. Certainly a wolf was seen at my court once; it flew at the Queen in anger, and was driven out by my servants. But I put no faith in this story until this wolf came to-day and did obeisance to me. I pray that I have done no wrong, for truly this wolf bore himself strangely towards me."

"Sire," said William, "this story may well be true. I know indeed that this wolf has a man's mind, a better mind, mayhap, than both of ours together. Many times had I been dead ere now had not this beast saved me. He must indeed be a werewolf, and I pray that he is your son. Lady Queen," he said, turning to Felice, "the King of Spain is my prisoner; I took him in fair fight. Grant me that I may make certain conditions with him."

"I grant it," answered the Queen.

"Hearken, sire," continued William. "You would be glad and blithe to see your lost son again, if, as I think, this werewolf be he. And you would be glad and blithe to be free once more. But I say to you that neither thing shall come to pass save upon one condition. Your Queen Braunden, if she be so skilled in witchcraft that she can change men into werewolves, as you say, can with her cunning and her

quaint charms likewise change werewolves into men again. She shall change the werewolf into a man, and you shall command her straitly to come hither with all speed. Till she has come and tried her enchantments on the werewolf you shall never go free. Send a messenger and bid her come, and say that if she refuses, I will come to Spain with fire and sword and destruction, and hale her thence by force."

The King of Spain chose certain of his lords to carry this message, and they set out at once. After many days' journey they came to the Queen in Spain, and gave her the King's commands. She made ready without tarrying, and in a little while they began the journey back to Palermo, and arrived there as speedily as might be.

They came into the great hall of Felice's palace, and Queen Braunden of Spain was led to a throne on the dais. By her side sat the King and Prince Braundinis; and hard by were Felice, with William and Melior.

Meanwhile the werewolf had returned to Palermo, and abode in William's chamber till Braunden arrived. When all was ready he came into the hall. He passed among all the knights and barons, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and went to the foot of the dais.

When he saw Braunden sitting by the King, he waxed wroth; all his bristles stood on end, and he opened his jaws wide and roared terribly with a noise grim to hear. In a moment he would have sprung upon her, if William had not caught him by the neck.

"Help me, dear lords," cried Braunden in terror.

"I have done wrong, and deserve death; but spare me and take this wolf from me, and I will undo all the evil that I have wrought."

"Trust me, dear beast, as your own brother," said William to the werewolf, who growled fiercely and was fain to rend the Queen to pieces. "I sent for her for your sake, to help you and bring you to your true form again. If she do not, then, by Him who made us, she shall be burnt to cold ashes, and her ashes scattered to the winds of heaven; and her husband and her son and all their nobles shall be put in prison for ever, to live their days dolefully till death takes them. Do her no harm, dear friend; she shall help you or die."

At those words the werewolf was glad, and he crouched down at William's feet and kissed them. As soon as she saw that his wrath had passed, Braunden rose from her seat and came to him, and knelt beside him. "Sweet Alfonso," she said, "you are truly my lord the King's son, my stepson. I have brought you to sorrow and done you great wrong, but if you will forgive me I will set right the evil that I have done."

She turned to William and the other lords and begged them to spare her life. But they would not pardon her unless she would disenchant the werewolf; and that at last she vowed to do.

She took the werewolf into a chamber alone with her. Then she brought forth a rich and noble ring, with a stone in it of such value that no witchcraft could prevail over him who wore it. She bound the ring with a red silk thread round the werewolf's neck;

and when she had done that she read for a long time enchantments out of a fair book which she took from a certain chest; and in a little while there stood before her no wolf, but a man as fairly shapen and as comely as could be.

Long and great were the rejoicings when the King of Spain and William and the rest found that Alfonso was a wolf no longer. But they rejoiced even more at what he said at a feast which they held straightway.

"This good knight, whose strength hath ended the war here," he said, pointing to William, "bore himself in true knightly fashion. None of you know who he is; but I will tell you. In helping Queen Felice, he helped his mother; he is her son, and Embrons was his father. I was the werewolf who stole him from Palermo many years ago; and I think I was sent by God Himself, for if I had not stolen William, he would have been foully done to death. Embrons' brother, that fell knight who, but for William, would have succeeded to the kingdom, bribed two nurses, and in a day or two they would have poisoned William, if I had not carried him off. I knew also that in time he would bring me back to my man's shape, and ever have I watched over him and delivered him out of danger."

"Dear friend," said William, embracing him, "God reward you for your constancy and love, for I know not how to requite you."

"It were not hard to requite me," said Alfonso.

"In what manner?" asked William.

"Grant me one thing only," answered Alfonso.

"I will give you all my realm, save only Melior," said William.

"I care not for your realm if you will but give me your sister the Princess Florence to wife."

"Gladly will I, if she be willing;" and since Florence was ready enough to wed so comely a prince, Alfonso won his reward.

Then William was crowned King of Palermo; and when he was crowned he sent messengers to the Emperor of Rome, asking his pardon for carrying off his daughter, and begging him to come to Palermo and give her to him in marriage. He sent also other messengers to the good cowherd who had brought him up, and gave him for reward an earldom and a fair castle and great store of gold and silver.

Anon came the Emperor of Rome, and Melior was happily wedded to William, and Florence to Alfonso; and yet a third marriage was held, for Alexandrine came in the Emperor's train, and when Braundinis, the Prince of Spain, saw her, he fell so deeply in love with her that he must needs wed her on the instant.

Thus William and the werewolf came into happiness with their ladies. Long and prosperously did they reign in Apulia and Spain. When the Emperor of Rome died, William was chosen in his stead; and for many years he ruled justly and did good works, and ended his days in peace.

King Robert of Sicily

YOU, proud princes, who are high in men's esteem, listen, and I will tell you a thing.

In Sicily there was a noble King, named Robert, fair and strong and powerful: in all the world he had no equal. Men called him "Great" and "the Conqueror," and he was the prince of all knighthood in his day. His brothers were Pope Urban and Valemond, Emperor of Germany, a great warrior. This King Robert was filled with pride, and thought that no man was his like.

It chanced one day, on the eve of St. John's Day, he went to church to evensong; but, as was his wont in that holy place, he thought more of his worldly honour than of humbleness before God. As he sat there he heard the words of the service:

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek."

"What mean these words?" he asked of a learned clerk.

"Sire, they mean that God can with ease make men in high places fall low, and bring the lowly into high places. He can bring this to pass in the twinkling of an eye."

"It is a false tale," said the King. "Who hath power to bring me low or in danger? I am the flower of chivalry; I may destroy my enemies as I will. There is no man that lives who may withstand me."

Thus he spoke, and thus he thought in his heart; and while he thought, a deep sleep came on him as he sat in his kingly seat. Evensong drew to an end, and still King Robert of Sicily slept. All men went out of the church, and left him sleeping; and they knew not that the King was not with them, for in his place there appeared an angel, in the King's likeness, clad in the King's robes, wearing the King's crown; and the angel was taken for the King and returned to the King's palace, and feasted there, all the court having great gladness in his presence.

Night fell upon King Robert as he lay in church, and at length he woke, alone. He cried for his serving men, but no man came. He cried again, but there was no answer, until at last the sexton heard and came to the church door. When he perceived a man in the church, he cried angrily: "What do you here, false knave? You are here with intent to rob!"

"I am no thief! I am the King!" answered King Robert. "Open the church door that I may go to my palace."

The sexton, at these strange words, believed that he

had to deal with a madman, and opened the church door in haste. King Robert ran out as if indeed he were mad, and rushed to his palace. When he came to the gates, he called to the porter with loud abuse, and bade him open at once.

"Who are you?" asked the porter. "What is your name?"

"You shall know right soon," said the King. "I am your lord. You shall be cast into prison, and be hanged and drawn and quartered as a traitor. You shall know that I am the King. Open the gates."

"I vow to you," said the porter, "that the King is now within with all his court. I know it without doubt."

But to make certain he left the gate and went within, to the great hall of the palace. There on the King's throne sat the angel in the likeness of King Robert.

"Sire," said the porter, "there is a poor fool at the gate who says he is lord and King, and abuses me. What shall I do to him? Shall I let him come or bid him go?"

"Bring him hither straightway," answered the angel. "I will make him my fool till he gives up this name of King."

The porter went back to the gate and opened it. In ran King Robert, and smote him on the mouth, till the blood came. But the porter called his men, and threw him into a puddle, so that his clothes were all soiled. Then they brought him into the presence of the new King.

"A deep sleep came upon King Robert."

"My lord King," said the porter, "this fellow struck me without reason; and he says that he is the King. He has said naught to me but this—that he is King and lord, and that I shall be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for a traitor."

"Fool," cried the angel, "you are mad to do such hurt to my servants. You shall pay the price. Who are you?"

"You know well who I am," answered King Robert. "I am King, and King will I be, whatever you do. You sit in my place wrongfully. The Pope is my brother, and the Emperor of Germany is my brother. They will uphold me."

"You are my fool," said the angel. "You shall be shorn like a fool, for now you are without a King's dignity. For councillor you shall have an ape, who shall be clad as a fool, like you; he shall be your brother. Perchance of him you may learn wisdom. You shall eat from off the ground, like the dogs, and with them."

The angel summoned a barber, who cut King Robert's hair like a fool's, bare to within a hands-breadth of his ears. He stormed and shouted to no avail, and cried in vain that he would be avenged upon them all. Every man scorned him, and laughed at him for a madman.

So the mighty King Robert of Sicily, for his pride, was put down from his seat, and God Himself could bring him to no lower estate. He was below the meanest serving man. He knew the direst hunger and thirst, for the dogs eat out of his plate, and he

was brought nigh to starvation before he would eat after them. Every day was more bitter to him, for every day the angel called him, and asked scornfully, "My fool, are you King?"

Yet King Robert would not abate his pride. "I am King," he answered every day. "Though I am cast down, yet am I the King."

"You are my fool," said the angel.

Meanwhile King Robert's dominions prospered. The angel ruled justly and wisely. There was great plenty in the land, and men dwelt in peace with one another.

Thus for three years the angel reigned. At the end of that time there came to Sicily an embassy from Valemond the Emperor, proposing to the King that they should go together to visit their brother the Pope. The angel welcomed the ambassadors, and gave them rich robes of ermine, and feasted them; and at length he set out with them for Rome. In his train rode Robert of Sicily, clad in fool's motley, decked, for a mockery, with foxes' tails; and on his shoulder sat a grinning ape. The angel was clad all in white, with a white steed richly caparisoned, so that he looked truly a King; but at the sight of King Robert and his ape all men broke into jeering laughter.

They came to Rome, and the Pope and the Emperor welcomed the angel as their brother, with great splendour and rejoicings. At their meeting King Robert could not contain himself, but rushed among them, crying eagerly on his brothers to recognise him.

"This is no King," he said, pointing to the angel.

"He has taken my crown and my throne and my kingdom by some trick. I am Robert of Sicily."

But the Pope and the Emperor would have none of him. His words seemed but another proof of his madness.

And now, when all men cast him off, even his own brothers, King Robert began to feel true repentance in his heart. "Alas," he cried, "how low have I fallen: I am more forlorn than any man alive." Then he thought how he had come to this pass; how in his pride he had said "no man hath power to bring me low;" and, behold, he was lower now than his humblest servant. He thought of other Kings whom God had put down from their seat; of Holofernes, who was slain, and of Nebuchadnezzar, who, being made as the beasts of the field, by God's grace became King again.

"I am even as Nebuchadnezzar," he said to himself. "For my evil pride I am set in this sorry case, and it is right that I should be thus. Lord, on Thy fool have pity. I repent of my sin. I alone did wrong, for I leaned not on Thee, and despised Thy word. Have pity on Thy fool, O Lord."

Thus King Robert repented of his pride; and peace came into his heart thenceforth.

In five weeks' time the angel once more returned to Sicily, King Robert, still habited as a fool, in his train. When they came to the royal palace, the angel called King Robert before him, and asked him, as of old, "Fool, are you King?"

"No, sire," answered King Robert.

"What are you, then?" asked the angel.

"Sire, I am your fool," answered King Robert, "and more than a fool, if that may be."

The angel went into his private chamber, and summoned King Robert thither to him; and they were left alone.

"You have won God's mercy," said the angel. "God has forgiven your pride. Henceforth serve and dread Him; think of the lowly estate to which you were cast down, and how lowly is even a King by comparison with the King of Heaven. Know now that I am an angel, sent to keep your kingdom from harm while you learnt humility; more joy shall fall to me in one hour of one day in Heaven than here on earth befalls a man in an hundred thousand years. I am an angel; you are the King."

In the twinkling of an eye the angel vanished. King Robert returned to the hall of the palace, and was received once more without question as King.

For three years he reigned wisely and prosperously, until he received warning, in a dream, that the hour of his death was near. Then he wrote down all the story of his fall from high estate, and sent it to his brethren, that they and all men might know that God alone has true power; and this is the tale that has been handed down concerning him.

"'What are you?' asked the angel. 'Sire, I am your fool,' answered King Robert."

Sir Cleges and the Cherries

LISTEN, and you shall hear of the men of the old time before us, hardy and gallant.

In the time of King Uther, father of the great King Arthur, there lived a knight by name Sir Cleges; no doughtier man was there at the Round Table than he, and none of greater might or fairer looks.

He was so gentle and open of hand that he gave freely to all wandering men who had fallen on evil days. The poor he succoured, and he did no man harm. Any man might come to eat at his board, where always plenteous meat and drink stood ready.

This knight had a gentle wife, the best of her day. Dame Clarys was her name. She was ever of good cheer and merry, bountiful to the poor, true in all her dealings.

Every year at Christmas Sir Cleges would hold a great feast, in honour of the season, providing as royally in all things as if he had been a king. Rich and poor in the country round came to his feast; and there were minstrelsy and mirth, and rich gifts of

robes and jewels, horses, gold and silver, for the guests when they departed.

For ten years did Sir Cleges hold his feast for charity's sake. But at the last his goods began to fail, so that he had little wealth left. But he would not give up the feast for many years more, until at length all his store was spent, and he had no more, save barely enough for himself and Dame Clarys and their two children to live upon. His proud friends and servants began to fall away from him on every side; none would dwell with him in his poverty.

It befell that one Christmas, when Sir Cleges was in his sorry case, the King, dwelling at Kardyf, made a feast. As it drew towards noon of the appointed day, Sir Cleges, who formerly had sat at the King's table, but now was forgotten as if he had been dead, chanced to fall a-thinking on his lost fortunes; he remembered how, with a free hand, he had wasted his rents and sold his manors, and great sorrow came upon him. He wrung his hands and wept, and all his pride was humbled. As he paced to and fro he heard the noise of the King's feast; the sound of singing and carolling, and dancing, of pipes, trumpets, harps, psalteries, and lutes; and at that his heart was utterly cast down.

"Lord Jesus, King of Heaven," he prayed in his humility, "Thou hast made all things of nought: I thank Thee for the sound of this mirth. Even as now the King does, so did I formerly feast slave and freeman alike at this Thy season. All who came to me in Thy name wanted for nothing, were it rich meats or goodly drinks, and never did I lend for usury."

As he stood mourning, his good wife came to him and caught him in her arms. "My lord and true lover," she said, "I heard your words. It avails nought to make this lament; I pray you cease, and thank God for all that He has sent. On this Christ's day put aside your sorrow. Go we to our meal now, and make blithe and merry as best we may."

"Yes," said Sir Cleges, and went in with her, and somewhat abated his grief. Yet his heart was still sore till Dame Clarys comforted him once again. Then he began to wax blithe, and wiped away his tears. They washed, and went in to eat of such victuals as they had, and made merry together. They drove the day away as best they might, and played with their children, and after supper went to bed in due time.

On the morrow they went to church, and there Sir Cleges kneeled down and prayed that no harm or strife might come upon them; and his wife prayed the like, and for Sir Cleges also, that God would keep him safely. Then they went home comforted, and put away sad thoughts from them.

But when Sir Cleges had come home, with his sorrow lessened, he sent his wife and children apart, and himself went into his garden, and there knelt down, and thanked God for the content that had come into his heart instead of sadness, and for the poverty that had been sent to him.

As he knelt thus and prayed under a tree, he felt a bough upon his head. He rose up, and laid his hand upon the bough, and behold, a marvel was

before him. Green leaves he found upon the bough, and round cherries (for it was a cherry tree) in plenty.

"Dear God," quoth he, "what manner of berry may this be that grows at this time of the year? At this season I know not that any tree should bear fruit."

He thought to taste the fruit, and put it in his mouth, and eat plenteously. It tasted like a cherry, the best that ever he had eaten. Thereat he cut off a little bough to show to his wife, and took it into the house.

"Lo, dame!" said he, "here is a new thing. On a cherry tree in our garden I found this fruit. I trow this is a great marvel; I fear it is a token of more harm that is to come to us. Yet whether we have less or more, let us always thank God: that is best, in truth."

Then said Dame Clarys with gladness, "Let us fill a basket-ful of the gift that God hath sent. To-morrow at dayspring you shall to Kardyf to the King, and give the cherries to him for a present. You may have from him such a gift that we may fare well all this year. I tell you truth."

Sir Cleges agreed. "To-morrow to Kardyf will I go, according to your counsel."

On the morrow, when it was light, Dame Clarys made a basket ready. She called her eldest son. "Take up this fair basket," said she, "and bear it to Kardyf with your father."

Sir Cleges took a staff: he had no horse (so says

"'On a cherry tree in our garden I found this fruit.'"

the story) to ride, neither steed nor palfrey; only a staff was his horse, as is the lot of a man in poverty. Together he and his son set out on foot on the road to Kardyf.

In time they came to the Castle, where the King lay, about the hour when men sat down to feast; and Sir Cleges thought to enter at the great gate. But he was clad in poor and simple raiment, and the porter barred the way.

"Churl," said the man, "withdraw, I bid you, right speedily, or I will break your head. Go stand with the beggars. If you come further in, I will smite you a buffet that you will rue."

"Good sir," said Sir Cleges, "I pray you let me go in. I have a gift for the King from Him who made all things of nought. Behold what I bring."

The porter went to the basket, and lifted the lid, and beheld the cherries. Well he knew that for such a gift he who brought it would have a great reward.

"You come not into this place," he said, "unless you promise me the third part of whatsoever the King grants you, whether it be silver or gold."

Sir Cleges said, "I agree." The porter gave him leave to enter, and in he went without more ado.

But at the hall door stood an usher with a staff, ready to smite him if he entered unbidden.

"Go back, churl," he cried. "Haste and tarry not. I will beat every bone in your body, without stint, if you press further."

"Good sir, for the love of Him who made man," said Sir Cleges, "cease your angry mood. I have here

a present from Him who made all things out of nought and died on the Cross. Last night in my garden it grew: behold whether it be true or false."

The usher lifted the lid of the basket, and saw the cherries in very truth, and marvelled thereat.

"You come not in yet, churl," he answered, "until you grant me the third part of whatsoever you are given for these cherries."

Sir Cleges saw no other way, and granted what the usher asked. Then with sadder heart he led his son with the basket into the King's hall.

The King's steward walked to and fro in the hall among the lords and knights. To Sir Cleges he came straightway and said, "Who made you so bold as to come here? Get hence, with your rags, and that speedily."

"I have here brought a present for the King from our Lord who bought us on the Cross," answered Sir Cleges.

The steward took the basket, and opened it. "Never saw I such fruit at this season of the year," he cried, "no, not since I was born. You shall not come nigh the King unless you grant me this—the third part of whatsoever the King gives you. This I will have, or no further do you go."

"My reward is all swallowed up by these three men," thought Sir Cleges, "and I shall have nothing. I shall get nought for all my labour in coming hither unless it be but a meal."

"Have you no tongue, rogue?" cried the steward, since Sir Cleges did not answer. "Speak to me, and

delay no longer : grant what I ask, or I will rouse you with a staff, so that your ribs rattle, and you are cast out headlong."

Sir Cleges saw nothing for it but to agree, and he answered with a sigh, "Whatsoever the King grants me, you shall have a third part, be it less or more."

Up to the daïs Sir Cleges went, and full soberly and with good intent knelt before the King. He uncovered the basket and showed the cherries, and said, "Our Saviour hath sent these to the King."

The King saw the fresh cherries. "This is a fair gift," said he, and bade Sir Cleges sit down to feast, meaning to speak with him thereafter. The cherries he sent in part to a fair lady in Cornwall, and in part divided them among his guests there in the hall.

When the feast was done, the King bade a squire, "Call now before me the poor man that brought these cherries."

Sir Cleges came, and tarried not, and fell on his knees before the King and his nobles. "Lord King, what is your will ?" he asked. "I am your man free-born."

"I thank you heartily," said the King, "for this your gift. You have honoured my feast and my guests, young and old, and you have honoured me also. Whatsoever you will have, I will grant you."

"Gramercy, liege King," said Sir Cleges ; "this is good tidings to me. I tell you truly, to have land or other riches would be too much for me. But since I may choose for myself, I pray you grant me twelve

strokes, to deal out as I please, and to give to my adversary with my staff even in this hall."

Then answered Uther the King, "I repent my boon that I have granted you. It were better that you had gold or reward: you have more need of it."

"Sire, what I ask is in your gift. I am fain to have it."

The King was sad and sorry at this reward, but nevertheless he granted it. Sir Cleges took his staff and went into the hall among the great lords and knights, without more words. He sought the proud steward, and found him speedily; and he gave him such a stroke that he fell down like a log before them all; and then Sir Cleges dealt him other three strokes, so that he cried out, "Sir, for your courtesy, smite me no more."

Out of the hall Sir Cleges went to pay his other debts, and no man hindered him. He went to the usher, and, "Take your strokes," he said when he met him; and he dealt him that which would make him forbid no man the way to the King for many a day afterwards, so grimly did Sir Cleges greet him. "You have there the third part of my reward," quoth Sir Cleges.

Sir Cleges went to the porter and gave him four strokes also. The first broke his shoulder blade and his arm, and he gave him three more for his full share, so that he would stop no more entering for many a day. "You have the third part of my reward," quoth Sir Cleges, "according to our covenant."

The King was in his chamber with mirth and

"The steward fell down like a log."

honour. Thither came Sir Cleges to thank King Uther again; and it chanced that a harper sang to the King the former deeds of a certain knight, even of Sir Cleges himself.

"Where is Sir Cleges?" asked the King. "You have wandered wide, harper; tell me truth, if you can. Know you of the man?"

"Yes," answered the harper. "Aforetime I knew him. He was a true knight, and a comely. We minstrels miss him, in sooth, since he went out of this land."

"I trow Sir Cleges is dead," said the King. "I loved him well. Would that he were alive! I would rather that he were alive than any other five, for he was strong and valiant."

Sir Cleges knelt before the King and thanked him for his boon. But the King asked him why he had paid the twelve strokes to the three servants, the steward, the usher, and the porter.

"Sire, I might not enter into your presence until I had granted each one of these three the third part of whatsoever you granted me. With that I should have nought myself, wherefore I asked and gave them twelve strokes; I thought that best."

The lords both old and young, and all that were with the King, made merry thereat, and the King could scarce withhold his laughter.

"This is a noble wight," quoth he, and sent for his steward. "Have you your reward?" he asked.

But the steward only reviled Sir Cleges, with a surly look.

Then said the King to Sir Cleges, "What is your name, good man? Tell me truly."

"I am Sir Cleges," he answered. "I was your own knight, King Uther."

"Are you Sir Cleges who served me, and were so generous and free, and so stout in the fight?"

"Even so, lord King; so was I, until God visited me and clad me thus in poverty."

Thereupon the King bestowed upon Sir Cleges all that belonged of right to a knight, to befit his rank; he gave him also the Castle of Kardyf, with many other gifts, that he might live with mirth and joy. And Sir Cleges rode home to Dame Clarys, his wife, and told her all that had been given him; and they lived thereafter in happiness to the end of their days.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

I. The Green Knight's Challenge

ING ARTHUR lay at Camelot at Christmas, with many trusty lords and ladies of the best, and all the company of the Round Table. They held rich revel, and jousted full merrily, and anon made carols. The Christmas feast lasted fifteen days, and all this fair band of folk was young, and the King was of greater fame than any that now could be found.

On New Year's Day, when the year was but freshly come in, the knights at the daïs were served with a double portion, and a solemn service was held, and all made festival. Queen Guinevere and her maidens sat at the board with the King, and by her side was good Sir Gawain, the King's sister's son. There was no lack of mirth and jollity and rich meats at that feast.

Suddenly, as the first course of the banquet was served, there rode in at the hall door a terrible knight. He was of more than man's stature, and so broad

and strong that he seemed half a giant. Yet he was a man, though the mightiest that ever rode a horse; his back and shoulders were huge, but his waist was small and seemly, and his features comely. He was clad all in green, his hair and beard were green, and he wore a straight green coat, with a mantle above, lined with fur. His hose were of green, and his spurs of clean bright gold. Round him and over his saddle ran a baldric set with jewels, curiously embroidered with figures of butterflies and insects, and fringed with green. All his harness, his stirrups, and his saddle bow were of golden enamel with green stones flashing in them. His very horse was green, a great thick-set steed, full hard to hold in.

The strange knight had no helmet or hawberk, nor any armour or arms; but in one hand he had a holly-staff (for holly is ever green when other trees are bare), and in the other hand an axe, huge and cumbrous, burnished bright, with a broad edge sharp as a razor.

At the entrance to the hall he stopped. He looked towards the daïs, but greeted no man. The first words he said were, "Where is the lord of this gathering? I would fain see him and speak with him."

He cast his eye on all the knights, to see which was the most renowned; and they looked back at him in wonder and amazement.

Then Arthur, seeing this knight waiting before the daïs, greeted him. "Sir Knight, you are welcome to this place. I am lord of it, and my name is Arthur.

Dismount and rest, and we will hear anon what your will is."

"Nay," quoth the Green Knight, "it is not my errand to abide any while here. But the praise of your city and your knights is gone far abroad, and men say that they are the best in the world. You may be sure from this holly-branch that I bear that I am at peace with you, for had I wished war, I had come in hawberk and helmet, with the shield and sharp shining spear that now I have left at my home. But if you be so bold as is said, tell me first if you will grant me that which I ask."

"Courteous knight," answered Arthur, "if you crave battle, it shall be given to you here."

"Nay, I fight not in battle. If I were in arms on my steed no man here could match me. I crave at this court but a Christmas sport, for it is Yule and New Year, and here are many knights gathered. If any man here holds himself so hardy and bold that he dares strike me one blow in return for another, I will give him a rich gift, this axe that I hold. I will abide the first blow clad even as I am here. If any dare this, let him now leap lightly to me, and take this axe, and I will quit my claim to it, and I will stand his blow here on this floor. You shall grant me the right to deal him a blow in turn, with a respite of a twelvemonth and a day between."

If the knights were amazed at first, they were stiller with surprise now. The knight rolled his red eyes upon them, and glared under his green eyebrows.

"What, is this Arthur's court?" he cried, when none came forward to answer his challenge. "Where are now your pride and your conquests, your wrath and your high words? Now is the renown of the Round Table abased by one man's challenge!"

With that he laughed aloud, and all the knights felt shame and sorrow; the blood rushed to the King's face, and he started up in wrath.

"Now, by heaven, your folly shall win its due reward," he cried. "I know no man here that fears your boast. Give me now your axe, and I will grant your boon."

Lightly he leaped towards the Green Knight, and laid hold of him; and the knight dismounted from his steed. Then Arthur took the axe and gripped it, and swung it about, making ready to strike. The Green Knight stood firm before him, and stroked his beard, and drew down his coat for the blow, no more dismayed than if a knight had brought him a cup to drink of.

But Gawain, who sat by the Queen, turned to the King, "I beseech you, fair lord," he said, "let this encounter be mine. Bid me rise from this bench and stand by you, that I may without discourtesy leave the Queen's side at the table. I think it not seemly that you yourself should take up this proud challenge in your very court, while so many bold knights sit nigh you to answer for you. I am the weakest, I ween, and feeblest of wit, and if I die it matters little. Let this challenge fall to me, and if I take it not up honourably, let all this court blame me."

As he spoke, all the knights cried out that the King should grant this deed to Gawain.

Then Arthur commanded Gawain to rise, and he rose up and knelt before the King, and took the axe in his hand. The King lifted up his hand and blessed him, and bade him be hardy and strong. "Fare safely, cousin," he said. "If I know ought, you will easily abide the blow he shall give you in return, if you do but strike true first. He will be a stout knight who can give a blow after he has had one at your hands."

Gawain strode to the Green Knight, the axe in his hand. "Let us plight our word," said the Green Knight, "ere we fall to. First tell me your name, Sir Knight."

"My name is Gawain: that I vow," answered Gawain. "And I will take your blow in return at this a twelvemonth hence, with what weapon you will."

"I will take your buffet, Sir Gawain," said the Green Knight. "You have readily rehearsed all the covenant I asked of the King; but this thing I ask also, that you shall seek me myself, wheresoever you hope I may be found, that you may receive back the gift you are to give me to-day."

"How can I seek you? Where is your dwelling? I know not your court or your name, Sir Knight. Teach me truly all this, and tell me how you are called, and I vow I will spend all my wits in coming to you for your return blow."

"That is enough," quoth the Green Knight. "I will tell you truly when I have had your blow. Then

will I straightway teach you the way to my dwelling, and my name, that you may keep our troth. Now give your blow."

"Gladly will I," said Sir Gawain, and made ready with the great axe.

The Green Knight bowed his head, and parted his hair that his neck might be free for the blow. Sir Gawain gripped the axe, and swung it high, putting his weight on his left foot, and let the blow fall on the Green Knight's neck. So true was the stroke, so keen the axe, that it sundered the bones, and shore through the neck, and the knight's head fell to the ground. But the Green Knight neither faltered nor fell, but stooped firmly, and lifted up the head. Then he mounted his horse, still holding his head in his hand, by the hair, as if he had been untouched.

When he was in the saddle, he turned the head towards the daïs; and it opened its eyes and looked full upon the King and his knights, and cried to them: "Look, Gawain, be sure that you are ready to go, as you have vowed before all these knights, and seek till you find me. I charge you, ride in a twelvemonth's time to the Green Chapel, and you shall there have on New Year's morn such a stroke as you have deserved. I am the knight of the Green Chapel, known to many, and you shall not fail to find me. Therefore come as I bid you, or be called recreant for ever after."

He turned and rode out at the hall door, his head in his hand, and his horse's hoofs struck sparks from the

"The Green Knight turned and rode out, his head in his hand."

ground To what place he went, none there knew, nor whence he had come.

Though Arthur the King was astonished in his heart, he let no show of wonder be seen in his face, but said courteously to the comely Queen: "Dear dame, be not dismayed; such craft is welcome at a Christmas festival. Now let me turn to my meat, for I have seen a wonder I may not forget. Sir Gawain, hang up your axe: it has hewn enough."

The axe was hung above the daïs, that all men might look at it and know these wonders were true. Then the knights fell a-feasting, with all manner of mirth and minstrelsy.

II. Sir Gawain Rides Forth

Christmas waned, and spring followed winter, and presently Michælmas came again, and Gawain thought of his appointed journey. Yet till All-Hallows Day he lingered with Arthur, and they made a feast with much revelry; but courteous knights and comely ladies were all in great grief for love of Sir Gawain, who must needs endure the Green Knight's stroke so soon.

After the feast Gawain spoke to Arthur. "Now, liege lord of my life, I ask your leave to go, as I vowed, to seek the Green Knight."

Then all the most famous knights gathered round Gawain, to counsel him, and there was much sadness in the hall that so worthy a knight should be going forth on such an errand. But Gawain would have

put aside their grief, saying, "Why should I flinch from destiny? What may a man do but face it?"

All that day he dwelt there. Early the next morning, when he had commended his soul to God, he was arrayed in his armour, and took his shield with the pentangle pointed thereon in pure gold. Now a pentangle is a figure that Solomon the Wise discovered, and it betokens truth, for it has five points, and every line in it crosses two others, and it is endless, so that the English call it "the endless knot." And this pentangle was a seemly device for Gawain, for he was found faultless in his five senses, and his five fingers never failed him, and all his trust was in the five wounds of Christ; and he had five virtues—frankness, fellowship, purity, courtesy, and pity, that passeth all the rest; and these five virtues were joined in Gawain, so that the pentangle on his shield was the very sign and emblem of himself.

When all was ready, he mounted his good steed Gringolet, and sprang on his way, so that sparks struck from the stones as he rode. His road lay first through the realm of Logres. Often he lay alone at night, with his steed for his only companion. Long did he journey, and came at last out of Logres into North Wales, and, passing thence by the ford at Holyhead, into Anglesea, and so into the wilderness of Wirral. Ever and anon he asked, of all whom he met as he fared along, if anywhere in that place was to be found the Green Chapel or the Green Knight; but all said him nay, for that never had they seen any knight of such hue. Many a cliff he climbed,

many a stream he crossed, and ever at the fords, ere he could cross, he must needs slay some doughty foeman who guarded the way. Sometimes he warred with dragons and wolves, with bears and boars, and sometimes with savage men. Had he not been so stout a knight, he had full often been slain.

It was many a day he pricked forward in sorrow and hardship, until Christmas Eve came. As he rode on that day he prayed in his heart that he might come upon some shelter for Christmas, where he might pay his vows to God and do worship. Even as he prayed, he looked up, and was aware of a Castle before him in the wood: before it was a lawn, and it stood on a mound, and a moat was round about it. It was the comeliest castle that ever a knight possessed, girt by great trees, with a spiked fence all round the moat for more than two miles.

At the sight of this Castle Sir Gawain raised his helmet, and thanked God that his prayer had been heard. Then he spurred Gringolet and rode on to the chief gate, where lay a drawbridge drawn up. The gates were shut fast, and the walls were so stout that they need fear no blast of tempest.

Sir Gawain called aloud at the bridge-end, and soon there came a porter, who, from the wall, asked his errand.

"Good sir," quoth Gawain, "will you go to the high lord of this Castle for me, and crave lodging?"

"Yea, that I will," answered the porter. "I ween you may abide here so long as you like."

Then he went, and come back anon with other

folk to welcome the knight. They let down the drawbridge, and opened the gates, and Sir Gawain rode in, greeting them. When he had come into the castle, squires held his stirrup for him to dismount, and received his armour from him, and served him in all things duly.

He entered the hall of the Castle, where a fire burned; there the lord of the Castle came forth and greeted him. "Do here as it pleases you," he said. "All that is here is yours to do with as you will."

"I thank you, sir," said Sir Gawain, and looked on him, and saw that he was a bold warrior, mighty in stature.

Then led they Gawain to a chamber, and robed him; and afterwards a great feast was held with all mirth and gladness; and when the folk in that Castle knew that they had for guest Sir Gawain of the Round Table, they were filled with joy, and more than ever strove to show honour to so fair a knight.

The next day, being Christmas Day, Sir Gawain and all the folk in the Castle paid their vows to God and His Son, and thereafter they held a great feast; and for three days they did the like. But on the third day Sir Gawain remembered his tryst, and would fain have gone from the Castle to meet the Green Knight. But the knight of the Castle would have had him tarry longer, until Gawain told him of his errand, and how he might by no means fail to find the Green Chapel by New Year's Day.

When the lord of the Castle heard Sir Gawain's

errand, he laughed. "Now shall you stay," he said, "for I will teach you the way to the Green Chapel, which is hard by this Castle. I know that dread Chapel. Rest and take your ease in bed for yet three days more, and on the fourth, which is New Year's Day, you shall ride forth, and even so shall come to the Green Chapel by mid-morn."

Then was Gawain full glad, and he laughed merrily. "Now I thank you for this counsel," quoth he. "My errand is achieved: I will dwell here at your will, and do as you deem right."

"See," said his host, "let us make a covenant for these three days. You have travelled far, and even now are not refreshed from your long journey. Lie at your ease to-morrow and the day after and the third day, and my lady wife shall comfort you, while I go a-hunting; and we will make this pledge, that whatsoever I win in the wood on each day, shall be yours; and whatsoever you win here in my house, you shall exchange for what I win. Let us vow this."

"I grant it," said Sir Gawain.

"Bring wine," cried his host; "the bargain is made."

They pledged one another with regard to this covenant, and then with friendly talk they went to bed. But when the lord of the Castle was in bed, he oft remembered their covenant in his mind.

III. The Three Gifts

Full early, before day, the folk rose up, some to take their leave and go elsewhere, some to abide at the Castle and hunt with its lord, who speedily, after prayer, blew his bugle and went forth to the chase. Nigh a hundred went with him, and all day they hunted, and fared well.

But while the lord hunted, Gawain lay in the Castle and took his ease in his bed till long after daylight shone on the walls. As he lay there he heard a little sound at the door; and he lifted his head out of the clothes, and pulled back a corner of the bed-curtain, that he might see who it was.

It was the fair lady of the Castle, who entered softly, and shut the door, and came towards the bed.

Gawain made as if he slept. But the lady came close to the bedside, and sat down thereby to wait till he should wake. Thereupon Gawain wondered to himself what this might mean. "It were more seemly," he thought, "to ask her what she would with me."

Thereat he made pretence to wake, and turned towards her, and looked on her with surprise.

"Good morrow, Sir Gawain," said that fair lady. "You sleep heedlessly, if I can enter thus unheard. Now are you my prisoner, since I have come upon you suddenly."

"Good morrow to you, dame," answered Gawain.

"I will do what you will, and I yield me prisoner gladly."

"Then shall I keep you here," said the lady, "and talk with my knight whom I have caught. You are Sir Gawain, whom all the world worships, and I too worship you."

"Nay, lady," quoth Gawain, "I am not worthy of such worship. I were glad if I might set myself at your service in any way."

"Sir Knight, you are very fair, and worthy of all worship. Truly I find it in my heart to love you."

"Nay, dame, that were not seemly; you are the wife of a true and valiant knight."

Thus they talked for long, the lady speaking words of love, and seeking by her arts to make him forget his knighthood and give her his love in return, and Sir Gawain ever setting aside her words, for his honour bade him pay no heed to such things. Till mid-morn did they converse; and then the lady took her leave. But as she gave him good-day, she glanced at him, and said, "I thank you for your courtesy, Sir Knight; but that you be Gawain, that must I doubt."

"Wherefore?" asked Sir Gawain, for at her words he feared that he had failed in courtesy.

"So good a knight as Gawain is said to be," quoth the lady, "could not have dallied so long with a lady without of courtesy he craved a kiss when they parted."

"I will do even as it pleases you," said Sir Gawain.

At that the lady came near, and stooped over him. Then with all courtesy she kissed him.

That evening, when the lord of the Castle returned, he brought the plenteous spoils of the chase, and showed them to Gawain.

"How like you this, Sir Gawain?" he asked. "All this have I won for you to-day. What have you won for me, according to our covenant?"

"This have I won," said Sir Gawain, and put his arms round him and kissed him courteously.

"It is good," said the other. "I thank you. Yet I would fain know where you won this gift."

"Nay, that was not bargained," said Gawain. "I give you what I received, neither more nor less. Ask me no more. You have your due."

Thereafter they feasted, and presently went to rest in all content and good fellowship.

On the morrow the lord of the Castle went forth hunting, and slew a great boar. Again his lady came to Gawain's chamber and gave him a kiss at parting; and in the evening Gawain rendered up the kiss even as at the first day, taking in exchange the slain boar. And on the third day it happened likewise that the lady kissed Gawain. But as the lady was leaving Gawain, having given him the third kiss, she said: "Now, dear knight, at this parting, do me this kindness; give me somewhat for a gift, if it be but your glove, that I may think of my knight and lessen my sorrow at his going. I have tempted you sorely, and you have resisted with all courtesy; yet I would fain have a remembrance of this pleasant converse of ours."

"Now I would that I had here the least thing,"

"He stooped over him, and with all courtesy kissed him."

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answered Sir Gawain; "and if I had ought, I would that I might give it you for your love of me, for you have deserved more reward than ever I could give. But it is not to your honour to have at this time a glove as a gift from me, for I am here on a wondrous quest, and have no gifts nor treasures with me, and may heed nothing but my quest."

"Nay, then," said the lady, "if I may have nought of yours, you shall have somewhat of mine."

She took from her finger a rich ring of red gold with a bright stone upon it. But Sir Gawain would not have the ring. "I will take no gift at this time, lady, for I am bound upon a quest," said he, "and think of nought else."

"If you will not have my ring, take this girdle," said the lady; and she loosened a strip of lace that was fastened at her side, of green silk with a golden braid.

But Gawain would have nothing of her, and he prayed her to ask him no more.

"You will not have this silken scarf?" said the lady. "Peradventure it seems simple and of little worth, and you despise it. But whosoever knew its virtue would value it at a great price, I trow. For if a knight be girt with this green scarf, there is no man under heaven can wound him, no, not by any guile on earth."

Then Gawain was sorely tempted in his heart to take this gift from her, for it would aid him in his quest and save him, peradventure, when he came to receive the Green Knight's blow. He pondered long; and

at last, since fear of the Green Knight had entered ever so little into his heart, he took the scarf, and gave thanks to the lady right courteously.

When the lord of the Castle returned that night, he brought with him but one fox that he had hunted long; and when he gave it to Gawain, Gawain gave him in return only the third kiss, concealing from him the green scarf, for he was minded to break his covenant in this little point, and keep the scarf for his own safety. Then he thanked him for the glad sojourn he had made at the Castle; and after they had feasted, they went to bed.

IV. The Green Chapel

Sir Gawain slept but little that cold New Year's Eve. Early in the morning he arose, and was clad and armed by the chamberlain. Then, with the lady's scarf about his waist, he sallied forth upon his good steed Gringolet, commending the Castle and all in it to Christ. The drawbridge was let down, the great gates thrown open, and Sir Gawain rode out with but one man to guide him to the Green Chapel.

They pricked on apace past bare hedges, and climbed the frost-bound cliffs. The sky was lowering; a mist lay on the moor and on the hill-tops like a cloak.

They came at length about sunrise to a high hill, where the snow lay white and bare around them. There the guide bade Gawain farewell.

"I have brought you now not far from the place you seek," he said. "But it is held to be a full

perilous place, and he who dwells there is stark and stern and mighty, greater of body than any man at Arthur's court. He slays all men who would pass by the Green Chapel, without mercy. I say sooth, that though you had twenty lives, yet you will be slain if you encounter him. Therefore, Sir Gawain, go some other road; seek not this man. I vow that I will hie me home again, and say no word to show that you fled."

"Gramercy," said Sir Gawain in anger. "You wish me well. But if I fled I were a coward knight, and could not be forgiven. I will go to this Green Chapel, come what may, and meet the Green Knight."

"If you will willingly lose your life," said the man, "I will not stay you. Ride down this road till you come to the bottom of the valley; there a little on your left will you see the chapel, and the knight who keeps it. Now farewell, and God keep you, noble Gawain; for all the gold on earth I would not go one step farther with you."

With that he turned and rode off, leaving Sir Gawain alone.

"I will neither grieve nor groan," quoth Gawain: "I give myself up to God's will."

Then spurred he Gringolet, and rode down into the valley. But he saw no sign of a chapel, but only high banks and rugged rocks. He halted his horse and looked about him. He discerned nought but a little green mound not far distant, to which he went. By it ran a swift stream, and the water bubbled as it ran.

Sir Gawain alighted from Gringolet, and tied the horse to a linden tree. Then he turned to the mound. It had a hole at the end, and on either side, and was all hollow within, as it were an old cave or a crevice in a crag. It was all overgrown with grass, and green from end to end.

"Is this the Green Chapel?" quoth the gentle knight. "It is an ugly place, overgrown with weeds, and it is seemly that the Green Knight should do his devotions here. This is a chapel of mischance, worthy of so fierce and fell a knight."

With his helmet on his head and his lance in his hand he roamed over the mound. Suddenly he heard from the hill beyond the brook a wonderful shrill noise, that rang loud through the cliffs, as if to cleave them; it was a sound as of a man whetting a scythe upon a grindstone, and it whirred and hissed like water on a mill-wheel.

"I trow there is one making arms ready for the knight who is to meet me here," quoth Gawain grimly. "Yet I fear not, even if my life be lost."

Then he called full loud: "Who waits in this steading to keep faith with me? Now is Gawain come here to keep his tryst, and to serve any man if he will but come hither speedily."

"Abide there," quoth one on the bank above Sir Gawain's head, "and you shall have all that I vowed to you."

The noise of the grindstone continued for a little. But suddenly it ceased, and from a cave by a crag on the hill came the Green Knight, rushing out of

the dark cave as in a whirlwind, and bearing in his hand a fell weapon, a Danish axe new whetted.

He was clad all in green, as of old, but fared on foot now. When he came down the hill to the water, he would not wade, but leaped it by the aid of his axe, and strode boldly across to where Gawain stood. He did him no reverence, but only said: "Gawain, you are welcome to this my place, and have timed your journey as a true man should. You know the covenant between us: here at this New Year I am ready to quit me of my debt to you. There are no knights here to stay us. Do off your helmet from your head, and have your pay. Let there be no more talk than when you shore off my head at one blow."

"Nay, by the God who gave me the breath of life," said Gawain, "I shall not flinch: I will stand still whatsoever you do."

He leaned his neck forward and bared it, and made as if he were undaunted, for he would show no fear.

Then the Green Knight gathered up all his strength and swung the grim axe aloft to smite Gawain. Had it driven downwards as true as he meant, Gawain would have been dead from that one blow. But Gawain, as the axe glided down, shrank a little with his shoulders, for fear of the sharp edge.

The Green Knight turned the bright axe aside in a twinkling, as he saw Gawain flinch.

"You are not that Gawain who is held so good a knight," he said in rebuke. "He never shrank from

any man by hill or vale, but you flinched before ever harm came to you. Never could I hear such cowardice reported of Gawain. Not so did I flinch when in King Arthur's hall my head was shorn from my shoulders and fell at my feet. Wherefore I must needs be called a better knight than you."

"I shrank once," quoth Gawain, "and so will I never again, though my head be cleft from my body. Haste you, Sir Knight, and deal my fate to me. I will abide your stroke and start from it no more, till your axe has hit me—have here my word upon it."

"Have at you then," quoth the other, and heaved the axe aloft like a madman. He swung it down heavily, but ere ever he hurt Sir Gawain, turned the axe aside once more, meaning to try him yet again, to see if he would flinch.

Gawain awaited the stroke unmoved, and flinched in no wise, but stood still as a stone.

Then merrily cried the Green Knight, "I have proved you, and I see that your heart is whole. Now will I smite. Hold aside the hood of your cloak, and let me strike."

"You threaten too long," said Sir Gawain in anger. "Have done with your blow."

"For sooth, so angrily you speak," said the knight, "that I will no longer wait."

Then he made ready to strike, frowning with lips and brow, so that it was no marvel that Gawain misliked him and had no hope of rescue.

The Green Knight struck. The edge of the blade

"He leaned his neck forward and bared it."

smote Sir Gawain on his bare neck, but though it cut the skin a little so that the blood came, it hurt him no more than that.

When Sir Gawain knew that the blow was done, he sprang away more than a spear's length, and took his helmet and shield swiftly, and drew his bright sword.

"You have had your blow, Sir Knight," he said, blither than ever since first he was born. "I have stood your stroke without repaying it, and if you give me more I will speedily requite you, and pay you back readily."

The Green Knight held aloof from him and rested on his axe, setting the shaft on the ground. He looked on Sir Gawain, and saw how he faced him undaunted; and in his heart he liked it well.

"Bold knight," he cried merrily, "no man here has used you in unknightly fashion or will. I vowed to give you a stroke, and you have had it. Hold yourself well paid. Know now that I am the lord of the Castle where you have lodged, and I have requited you for the three days of our covenant. You yielded a little to temptation in those days, and by these blows have I rewarded you. On the first day my wife kissed you, as I knew full well: I gave you in return the first blow, whereat you flinched. For the second kiss, I gave you the second blow, and held my hand from harming you. For the third kiss, I struck the third blow with my might and with fell intent. It is my green scarf, which my wife wrought for me, that you wear, which saved your life. That

also I know, for I myself sent her to prove your knighthood in the three days of my hunting, and in sooth by this test I find you the truest knight that ever went on foot. As a pearl among white peas is of more price than they, so is Gawain among all other knights. The kisses I make nought of: they were but courtesy. You lacked a little in your good faith in taking the gift of the green scarf; but that was for love of your life, and for no baser purpose, and I blame you not for it; a man may not be perfect, be he never so gentle a knight."

Gawain stood still in thought a great while, so grieved and sorry was his mind. The blood rushed to his face, and he shrank for shame as the knight talked. "Woe on you, cowardice and covetousness," he cried at last: "you are villainy and vice, that destroy virtue. You have undone me in this my quest."

Then he unloosened the green scarf, and gave it to the knight, saying, "Lo, take the sign of my falsehood. For fear of your stroke cowardice drove me to make friends with covetousness, so that I forsook the generous loyalty that beseems a knight. Now am I faulty and false, and have been afraid. Do your will with me, Sir Knight."

The Green Knight laughed. "I hold you purged of your sin," he said, "for you stood my blow like a true knight. This green scarf I give you, Sir Gawain. You may think upon this adventure of the Green Chapel when you go forth among princes of fame and might."

Gawain took the scarf, and thanked the Green Knight full courteously. "I will take it with good will," he said, "not for the worth of it, though it is precious and wondrously wrought, but to keep as a sign of my sin. One thing more I would pray of you. Since you be lord of yonder Castle and land, tell me your right name."

"That will I truly," quoth the other. "I am called Bernlak of Hautdesert. Morgan le Fay dwells in my Castle, and she has much magic lore, and has taken many men by craft. There is none so high and haughty that Morgan le Fay cannot abase him. She sent me in this green gear to Arthur's hall, to prove and test the pride and renown of the Round Table; and I have proved the Round Table by your knighthood, and find it the very mirror of chivalry. Come now to my Castle and greet Morgan le Fay, and make merry, for I love you as well as any man."

But Gawain said him nay, for he must ride to King Arthur's court. So they took their leave one of another with all love and courtesy, and parted there. The Green Knight took his way whithersoever he wished, and Sir Gawain rode back through wild ways to the King's city of Camelot. And when he was come thither, and had told his shame and whatever else had befallen him, all the knights vowed to wear thereafter a baldric of bright green, in remembrance of Sir Gawain's temptation and of his courage and of all his adventure with the Green Knight.

The Fair Unknown

IR GAWAIN had a son, and he was fair to look on, bright of face and well-favoured in body. He was named Geynleyn. But for love of his fair face his mother called him Beau-fys, and no other name; and he never asked her what he was truly called, for Sir Gawain had wedded this lady secretly, and none knew that he was Geynleyn's father.

It befell on a certain day that Geynleyn went to the woods to hunt the deer, and there he found a knight in strong gay armour, lying slain. Geynleyn wondered thereat for a space; but in a little time he took off the knight's garments, and clad himself in that rich armour; and when he had done this, he went to Glastonbury, where King Arthur lay at that time. He came into the hall before the knights and greeted them with honour.

"King Arthur, my lord," he said, "grant that I may speak a word, I pray you. I would fain be made a knight."

Then said Arthur the King, without tarrying, "Tell

"We found a knight lying slain."

me your name, for since I was born never saw I before me one so fair to look on."

"I know not what is my true name," answered the lad. "While I was at home, my mother, jesting, called me Beau-fys, and nought else."

Then said Arthur the King, "This is a wondrous thing, that the boy should know not his name when he would become a knight; and yet he is full fair of face. Now will I give him a name before you all. Let him be called Le Beau Disconus, which is to say, 'The fair unknown': so is he to be named."

Thereupon King Arthur made him a knight on that self-same day, and gave him bright arms, and girt him with a sword of might, and hung round him a shield, wrought with the design of a griffin. Sir Gawain took charge of him to teach him knightly ways.

When Le Beau Disconus had been made a knight, he asked yet another boon of the King. "My lord so free," he said, "I were right glad in heart if I might have the first fight that is asked of you."

"I grant your asking," answered Arthur the King, "whatsoever the combat be. But by ought that I can see you seem too young to do well in a great fight."

Then sat they down to feast. Not long had they feasted ere there came a maiden riding, and a dwarf beside her, in a great heat as though with haste. This maid was called Elene the bright and gentle; no countess or queen could be her equal in loveliness. She was clad richly in cloth of Tars, and the saddle and bridle of her milk-white steed were

full of diamonds. Her dwarf wore silk of India: a stout and bold man was he, and his beard, yellow as wax, hanged down to his girdle. His shoes were decked with gold, and truly he seemed a knight that felt no poverty. His name was Teondelayn; he was skilled in playing all musical instruments—the citole, the harp, the psaltery, and the fiddle.

The dwarf spoke to the maiden, and would have her tell her errand, and lose no time.

The maiden kneeled in the hall before all the knights, and greeted them with honour, and said, "Never was sadder tidings than I bring. My lady of Synadown is brought into a strong prison; she prays King Arthur to send her a knight of stout courage, to win her out of prison."

Up started the young knight Le Beau Disconus; his courage was stout and high. "Arthur, my lord," he said, "I shall take up this combat, and win the lady bright, if you are true to your word."

"Certain it is that I have promised even so," said King Arthur. "God grant you grace and might."

Then began Elene to complain, and said, "Alas that I was ever sent hither. Now will the word go forth that Arthur's manhood is lost, if you send a witless and wild child to deal doughty blows, when there are here knights of proved valour, Lancelot, Perceval, and Gawain."

Le Beau Disconus answered, "Yet never was I afraid of any man; I have learned somewhat of fighting with spear and sword. I will take the battle, and never forsake it, as is Arthur's law."

Then said Arthur, "Maiden, you get no other knight of me. If you think him not man enough, go get another of greater might where you may."

The maid said no more; but for wrath she would neither drink nor eat at their feast, but sat down with her dwarf till the tables were taken away.

King Arthur bade four of the best knights of the Round Table arm Le Beau Disconus straightway in arms true and perfect. "Through the help of Christ, he shall hold to his word, and be a good champion to the lady of Synadown, and uphold all her rights," he said.

When he was armed Sir Le Beau Disconus sprang on his horse and received the King's blessing, and set forth a-riding with the maiden and the dwarf. Till the third day she ever chided the young knight; and on the third day, when they came to a certain place, she said, "Caitiff, now is thy pride undone. This vale before us is kept by a knight who will fight every man that comes; and his fame is gone far abroad. William Selebranche is he named, and he is a mighty warrior. Through heart or thigh of all those who come against him he thrusts his spear."

"Does he fight so mightily then?" asked Le Beau Disconus. "Has he never been hit? Whatsoever betides me, against him will I ride and prove how he fights."

On they rode all three with gay and steadfast hearts till they came to a castle adventurous in a vale perilous. There they saw a knight in bright armour. He bore a shield of green, with a device of three

lions: and he was that William Selebranche of whom maid Elene had spoken.

When the knight had sight of them he rode towards, and said, "Welcome, fair brother. He that rides here, day or night, must fight with me, or leave his arms here shamefully."

"Now let us pass," said Sir Le Beau Disconus. "We have far to go to our friends, I and this maid; we must needs speed on our way."

"You shall not escape so," answered William. "Ere you go we will fight, a furlong here to the west."

Then said Le Beau Disconus, "Now I see that it must be so. Make ready quickly and do your best. Take a course with the spear, if you are a knight of skill, for I am in haste."

No longer did they abide, but rode together in arms. Le Beau Disconus smote William in the side with his spear; but William sat firm in his saddle. Nevertheless so mightily was he struck that his stirrup leathers brake, and he swayed over the horse's crupper and fell to the ground. His steed galloped away, but William started up speedily. "By my faith, before this day never found I so a stout man," he said. "Now that my steed is gone, let us fight on foot."

Le Beau Disconus agreed, and they fell to on foot with falchions. So hard they struck that sparks flew from their helmets. But William drove his sword through Le Beau Disconus's shield, and a piece of it fell to the ground; and thereat Le Beau Disconus was wroth. He smote with his sword downwards

from the crest of William's helmet even to his hawberk, and shaved off with the point of his blade the knight's beard, and well nigh cut the flesh also. Then William smote him back so great a blow that his sword brake in two.

"Let me go alive," cried William at last, seeing himself reft of his arms. "It were great villainy to do to death an unarmed knight."

"I will spare you," said Le Beau Disconus, "if you swear a vow ere we go from one another. Kneel down, and swear on my sword to go to King Arthur, and say to him, 'Lord of Renown, a knight sent me hither, defeated and a prisoner: his name is Le Beau Disconus, of unknown kith and kin.'"

William went upon his knees and took a vow as Le Beau Disconus bade him, and thus they departed each on his way. William took the road to Arthur's court; and it chanced that as he went, he met, on that self-same day, three proud knights, his own sister's sons.

"William our uncle," said they when they saw his wounds and his sorry array, "who has done you this shame?"

"Nought is the man to blame," answered William. "He was a knight stout and stern; a dwarf rode before him as if he were his squire, and also there went with him a fair damsel. One thing only grieves me sorely, that I must at his bidding go to King Arthur's court." And he told them of his vow.

"You shall be full well avenged," said they. "He alone against us three is not worth a straw. Go your

way, uncle, and fulfil your vow; and we will assail this traitor ere he be out of this forest."

Then William went on his way to the court of King Arthur. But the three knights his nephews armed themselves, and leapt on their steeds, and without more tarrying went after Le Beau Disconus.

Le Beau Disconus knew nought of this, but rode on with the fair maid, and made great mirth with her, for she had seen that he was a true and doughty knight. She asked pardon for the ill things she had said against him at the King's court, and he forgave her this trespass; and the dwarf was their squire, and served them in all their needs.

At morning when it was day, as they rode on towards Synadown, they saw three knights in bright mail riding out of Caerleon, armed for a fight to the death. They cried to him straightway, "Thief, turn again and fight."

"I am ready to ride against you all," quoth Le Beau Disconus.

He pricked his horse towards them. The eldest brother (Sir Gower was his name) ran against him with a spear; but Le Beau Disconus smote him such a blow that he brake his thigh, and ever thereafter was lame. The knight groaned for pain, but Le Beau Disconus with might and main felled him altogether. The Dwarf Teondelayn took the riderless steed by the rein, and leapt himself into the saddle, and rode to where the fair maid sat. Then laughed she, and said, "This young knight is the best champion we could have chosen."

The next brother came riding fierce as a lion, as if to cast Le Beau Disconus down. Like a warrior out of his wits he smote Le Beau Disconus on his helm with his sword; he struck so hard that the blade drove through the helm and touched the young knight's head.

Then Le Beau Disconus, when he felt the sword touch him, swung his sword as a madman, and all that he struck he clove through. Though two were against him —for the third brother also came riding to the fray —they saw that they had no might to withstand him in his fury. They yielded up their spears and shields to Le Beau Disconus, and cried mercy.

"Nay," answered Le Beau Disconus, "you escape not so unless you plight me your faith to go to King Arthur, and tell him that I overcame you and sent you to him. If you do not so I will slay you all three."

The knights swore to go to King Arthur, and plighted their troth upon it. Then they departed, and Le Beau Disconus and the fair maid rode on towards Synadown. All that day they rode, and at night they made their lodges in the wood out of green leaves and boughs, for they came nigh no town or castle; and thus for three days they pricked ever westwards.

But as they slept at night the dwarf woke, fearing that thieves might steal their horses. Suddenly his heart began to quake, for less than half-a-mile away he saw a great fire.

"Arise, young knight," he cried. "Arm yourself,

and to horse! I doubt there is danger here: I hear a great sound, and smell burning afar off."

Le Beau Disconus leapt on his war-horse and took his arms, and rode towards the fire. When he drew nigh he saw there two giants, one red and loathly to look upon, the other swarthy as pitch. The black giant held in his arm a maiden as bright as a flower, while the red giant was burning a wild boar on a spit before the flaming fire.

The maiden cried aloud for help. "Alas," she said, "that ever I saw this day!"

Then said Le Beau Disconus, "It were a fair venture to save this maiden from shame. To fight with giants so grim is no child's game."

He rode against them with his spear, and at the first course smote the black giant clean through the body and overthrew him, so that never might he rise again. The maiden his prisoner fled from his grasp, and betook herself to maiden Elene; and they went to the lodge of leaves in the wood, and prayed for victory for Le Beau Disconus.

But the red giant, seeing his brother fall, smote at Le Beau Disconus with the half-roasted boar, like a madman; and he laid on so sore that Le Beau Disconus's horse was slain. But Le Beau Disconus leapt out of the saddle, like a spark from a torch, and drave at him with his falchion, fierce as a lion. The giant fought with his spit till it broke in two; then he caught up a tree by the roots, and smote Le Beau Disconus so mightily that his shield was broken into three pieces. But ere the giant could heave up the

"'Arise, young knight, arm yourself, there is danger.'"

tree again, Le Beau Disconus struck off his right arm; and at that sore wound he fell to the ground, and Le Beau Disconus cut off his head.

Then Le Beau Disconus turned to the two maidens; and he learned that she whom he had saved was called Violette, and her father was Sir Antore, an earl in that country. Long had the two fell giants sought to take her; and the day before at eventide they had sprung out upon her suddenly and carried her off.

Le Beau Disconus took the giants' heads, and when he had escorted the maidens to the castle of Sir Antore, he sent the heads to King Arthur. Sir Antore would fain have given him Violette to wife; but Le Beau Disconus refused, saying that he was upon a quest with fair Elene. And with that they set forth once more on their journey.

Anon they came to the fair city of Kardevyle, and saw there in a park a castle stout and stark, royally built: never such a castle had they seen. "Oh," said Le Beau Disconus, "here were a worthy thing for a man to win."

Then laughed maid Elene. "The best knight in all the country round owns that castle, one Giffroun," she said. "He that will fight with him, be it day or night, is bowed down and laid low. For love of his lady, who is wondrous fair, he has proclaimed that he will bestow a gerfalcon, white as a swan, on him who brings a fairer lady. But if she be not so bright and fair as his lady, he must fight this knight Giffroun, who is a mighty warrior. Giffroun slays

him, and sets his head on a spear, that it may be seen afar abroad; and you may see on the castle walls a head or two set thus."

"I will fight this Giffroun," said Sir Le Beau Disconus, "and try for the gerfalcon; I will say that I have in this town a lady fairer than his; and if he would see her I will show him you."

"That were a great peril," said the dwarf. "Sir Giffroun beguiles many a knight in combat."

"Heed not that," answered Le Beau Disconus. "I will see his face ere I go westward from this city."

Without more ado they went to the town, and dwelt there in the inn for the night. In the morn Le Beau Disconus rose and armed himself, and rode with the dwarf towards Giffroun's palace.

Sir Giffroun, when he came out of his house, saw Le Beau Disconus come pricking as proudly as a prince. He rode out to him, and cried in a loud voice, "Come you for good or for ill?"

"I should have a great delight in fighting you," answered Le Beau Disconus, "for you say a grievous thing, that there is no woman so fair as your lady. I have in this town one fairer, and therefore I shall take your gerfalcon and give it to Arthur the King."

"Gentle knight," said Giffroun, "how shall we prove which of the two be fairer?"

"Here in Kardevyle city," said Le Beau Disconus, "they shall both be set in the market-place where all men may look on them. If my lady be not esteemed so fair as yours, I will fight with you to win the gerfalcon."

"All this I grant," said Sir Giffroun. "This day shall it be done." And he held up his glove for a proof.

Sir Le Beau Disconus rode to his lodging, and bade maid Elene put on her seemliest robes. Then he set her on a dappled palfrey, and they rode forth to the market-place.

Presently came also Sir Giffroun riding, with his lady and two squires. And the lady was so lovely that no man could describe her. All, young and old, judged that she was fairer than Elene; she was as sweet as a rose in an arbour, and Elene seemed but a laundry-maid beside her.

Then said Sir Giffroun, "Sir Le Beau Disconus, you have lost the gerfalcon."

"Nay," said Le Beau Disconus, "we will joust for it. If you bear me down, take my head and the falcon; and if I bear you down, the falcon shall go with me."

They rode to the lists, and many people with them. At the first course each smote the other on the shield, so that their lances were broken; and the sound of their onset was as thunder.

Sir Giffroun called for a lance that would not break. "This young knight is as firm in his saddle as a stone in the castle wall," quoth he. "But were he as bold a warrior as Alexander or Arthur, Lancelot or Perceval, I will shake him out over his horse's crupper."

Together they charged again. Le Beau Disconus smote Giffroun's shield from his arm at the shock:

never yet had man been seen to joust so stoutly. Giffroun, like a madman, struck furiously back at him, but Le Beau Disconus sat so firm that Giffroun was thrown, horse and all, and brake his leg.

Then said all men that Giffroun had lost the white gerfalcon; and they bore him into the town upon his shield. But Le Beau Disconus sent the white gerfalcon to King Arthur for a gift, and the King sent him a hundred pounds' weight of florins. And thereafter he feasted forty days in Kardevyle.

At the end of this feasting, Le Beau Disconus and maid Elene took their leave of Kardevyle, and rode towards Synadown. As they were riding, they heard horns blowing hard under a hill, and the noise of hounds giving tongue in the vale.

"To tell truth," said the dwarf Teondelayn, "I know that horn well. One Sir Otes de Lyle blows it; he served my lady some while, but in great peril fled into Wirral."

As they rode talking, a little hound came running across their way; never man saw hound so gay; it was of all colours of flowers that bloom between midsummer and May.

"Never saw I jewel," said maid Elene, "that so pleased me. Would I had him!"

Le Beau Disconus caught the hound, and gave him to her. And they went on their way.

They had scarce ridden a mile before they saw a hind fleeing, and two greyhounds close upon it. They stopped and waited under a linden tree to watch; and they saw riding behind the hounds a

knight clad in silk of India, upon a bay horse. He began to blow his bugle, so that his men should know where he was. But when he saw Le Beau Disconus, and the dog in maid Elene's arms, he drew rein and said, "Sir, that hound is mine; I have had him these seven years past. Friends, let him go."

"That shall never be," said Le Beau Disconus, "for with my two hands I gave him to this maiden."

Straightway answered Sir Otes de Lyle (for it was he), "Then you are in peril."

"Churl," said Le Beau Disconus, "I care not for whatever you say."

"Those are evil words, sir," said Sir Otes. "Churl was never my name. My father was an earl and the Countess of Karlyle my mother. Were I armed now, even as you are, we would fight. If you give me not the hound, you shall play a strange game ere evening."

"Whatsoever you do," answered Le Beau Disconus, "this hound shall go with me."

Then they took their way westwards once more. But Sir Otes rode home to his castle, and sent for his friends, and told them that one of Arthur's knights had used him shamefully and taken his little hound.

"The traitor shall be taken," said they one and all, "though he were a doughtier knight than Lancelot of the Lake himself."

They armed themselves, and when all was ready, rode out after Le Beau Disconus. Upon a high hill they saw him riding slowly.

"Traitor, you shall die for your trespass," they cried to him, when they came a little distance from him.

Sir Le Beau Disconus beheld how full was the vale of knights. "Maid Elene," he said, "we are come into a sorry case for the sake of this little hound. It were best that you go into the greenshaws and hide your heads. For though I be slain, yet will I abide combat with these knights."

Into the woods they rode; but Le Beau Disconus stayed without, as beseems an adventurous knight. They shot at him with bows and arbalists, but he charged with his horse, and bare down horse and man and spared none, so that they thought him a devil; for whosoever Le Beau Disconus struck, after the first blow that man slept for evermore.

But soon Le Beau Disconus was beset as in a net. Twelve knights he saw come riding through the forest, in arms clear and bright: all day they had rested, and thought thereby to slay Le Beau Disconus. One of them was Sir Otes himself; and they smote at Le Beau Disconus all at once, and thought to fell him.

Fierce was the fight; sword rang on steel, sparks sprang from shield and helmet. Le Beau Disconus slew three, and four flew. But Sir Otes and his four sons stayed to sell their lives there.

Le Beau Disconus against those five fought like a madman. His sword brake, and he took a great blow on his helmet that bore him down. Then the foeman thought to slay him outright; but Le Beau

"'Were I armed, even as you are, we would fight.'"

Disconus was minded suddenly of his axe that was at his hinder saddle-bow. Then quitted he himself like a true knight: three steeds he hewed down in three strokes. Sir Otes saw that sight, and turned his horse and fled. Le Beau Disconus stood no longer on defence, but pursued him, and caught him under a chestnut tree and made him yield.

Le Beau Disconus sent this knight also to King Arthur for a sign of his powers; and himself and maid Elene went to Sir Otes' castle, and there rested and were refreshed.

When they had tarried at this castle a certain time, they rode forth again. It was the month of June, when the days are long and birds' songs are merry. Sir Le Beau Disconus and maid Elene and the dwarf Teondelayn came riding by a river-side, and saw a great and proud city, with high strong castles and many gates. Le Beau Disconus asked the name of this city.

"They call it Isle d'Or," answered maid Elene. "Here hath been more fighting than in any country, for a lady of price, fair as a rose, has put this land in peril. A giant named Maugis, whose like is nowhere on earth, has laid siege to her. He is as black as pitch, stern and stout indeed. He that would pass the bridge into her castle must lay down his arms and do a reverence to the giant."

Then said Le Beau Disconus, "I shall not turn aside for him. If God give me grace, ere this day's end I will overthrow him."

They rode all three towards the fair city. On a

wooden bridge they saw Maugis, as bold as a wild boar. His shield was black, and all his armour black also.

When he saw Le Beau Disconus, he cried, "Tell me, fellow in white, what are you? Turn home again for your own profit."

"Arthur made me a knight," said Le Beau Disconus, "and to him I made a vow that I would never turn back. Therefore, friend in black, make ready."

They rode forthright at one another. Many lords and ladies leant from the towers hard by to see the fight, and prayed with good-will for Le Beau Disconus.

The two met. Their lances brake at the first blows. But they drew swords in a fury and rushed at one another. Le Beau Disconus smote the giant's shield so that it fell from him; but Maugis in turn slew Le Beau Disconus' steed with a great blow on its head. Le Beau Disconus said nought, but started up from his dead charger and took his axe: a great blow he struck, that shore the head of Maugis' horse clean from its body. Then they fell to on foot, and no man can tell of the blows that passed from one to the other; and they fought till evening drew nigh.

Sir Le Beau Disconus thirsted sore, and said, "Maugis, let me go to drink. I will grant you what boon you ask of me in like case. Great shame would it be to slay a knight by thirst."

Maugis granted his will, but when Le Beau Disconus went to the river and drank, Maugis struck him unawares such a blow that he fell into the river.

"By St. Michael," cried Le Beau Disconus, "now am I truly refreshed. I will repay you for this."

Then a new fight was begun, and they continued till darkness grew apace At length Le Beau Disconus struck such a blow that the giant's right arm was shorn off. Thereupon Maugis fled, but Le Beau Disconus ran swiftly after him and with three stern strokes clave his backbone. Then Le Beau Disconus smote off the giant's head, and went into the town; and all the folk welcomed him.

A fair lady came down to meet him, called La Dame d'Amour; and she thanked him for his aid against the giant, and led him to her palace. There he was clad in clean raiment, and feasted, and the lady would have had him be lord of her city and castle.

Le Beau Disconus granted her prayer, and gave her his love, for she was indeed fair and bright. Alas that he did not refrain! Twelve months and more he dwelt there; and fair Elene was afraid lest he might never go thence, for the lady of the castle knew much of sorcery, and put a charm upon Le Beau Disconus so that he wished never to leave her.

But it fell on a day that Le Beau Disconus met maid Elene by chance within the castle. "Sir knight," she said, "you are false of faith to King Arthur. For love of a sorceress you do great dishonour. The lady of Synadown lies in prison yet!"

At her words Le Beau Disconus thought his heart would break for sorrow and shame. By a postern-

gate he crept away from the lady of the castle, and took with him his horse and his armour and rode forth with maid Elene and the dwarf and a squire named Gyfflet. Fast they rode without ceasing till on the third day they came in sight of the strong city of Synadown, with its castle and its fair-wrought palace.

But Le Beau Disconus wondered at a custom he saw as he descried the town. For all the waste and refuse that was cast outside the town was gathered again by the folk and kept.

"What means this?" asked Sir Le Beau Disconus.

"This it is," said maid Elene. "No knight may abide here without leave of a steward called Sir Lambard. Ride to that eastern gate yonder, and ask his leave to enter fairly and well; ere he grants it, he will joust with you. And if he bears you down, he will blow his trumpets, and all through Synadown, at the sound thereof, the maidens and boys will throw on you this filth and mud that they have gathered; and so to your life's end will you be known as coward, and King Arthur shall lose his honour through you."

"That were great shame for any man living," said Sir Le Beau Disconus. "I will meet this man. Gyfflet, make me ready."

Then they made ready and rode to the castle gate, and asked where adventurous knights might find lodging.

The porter let them in and asked, "Who is your overlord?"

"'Sir knight,' she said, 'you are false of faith to King Arthur.'"

"King Arthur, the well of courtesy and flower of chivalry, is my lord," answered Le Beau Disconus.

The porter went and told Sir Lambard of the knight who had come, and Sir Lambard was glad thereat, and vowed to joust with him. Thereat the porter came again to Le Beau Disconus, and said, "Adventurous knight, do not tarry, but ride to the field without the castle-gate, and arm you speedily, for my lord would fain joust with you."

"That is a tale that I like well," said Sir Le Beau Disconus; and he rode to the field and made ready.

Presently there came the steward all armed for the fight, and they fell to. Long and fierce was the fray, but at the last Le Beau Disconus struck Sir Lambard so fiercely that he was borne clean out of his saddle backwards.

"Will you have more?" asked Sir Le Beau Disconus.

"Nay," answered Sir Lambard. "Never since I was born came I against such a knight. I have a thought that you must be kin to Sir Gawain, who is so stout and gay a knight. If you will fight for my lady, you are welcome, Sir Knight."

"Nay," said Sir Le Beau Disconus, "but I fight for a lady even now." And he told him the story of his errand. Then they went into Sir Lambard's castle and feasted and were right merry.

Sir Lambard and Sir Le Beau Disconus spoke much of adventures, and at last Sir Le Beau Disconus asked him concerning his quest. "What is the knight's name who holds in prison the gentle lady of Synadown?"

"Nay, sir, knight is he none. Two magicians are her foes, false in flesh and bone: Mabon and Irayn are their names, and they have made this town a place of strange magic arts. They hold this noble lady in prison, and often we hear her cry, but have no might to come to her. They have sworn to slay her if she will not do their will, and give up to them all her rights in this fair dukedom which is hers."

"I will win that lady from Mabon and Irayn," quoth Le Beau Disconus, "and will shame them both."

Then took they their rest. On the morrow Le Beau Disconus clad himself in his best armour, and rode forth to the gate of the great palace of Synadown; and with him for escort came Lambard and his knights. They found the gate open, but no further durst any man go save Le Beau Disconus and his squire Gyfflet; and Le Beau Disconus made Gyfflet also turn back with the rest.

Then he rode alone into the palace, and alighted at the great hall. He saw minstrels before the daïs, and a fire burning brightly, but no lord of the palace was there. Le Beau Disconus paced through all the chambers, and saw no one but minstrels who made merry with citole and psaltery: before each burnt a torch, and so much melody was never heard within walls. Le Beau Disconus went further, seeking those whom he should fight. He peered into all the corners, and looked on the wondrous pillars of jasper and fine crystal; but never a foe did he see.

At last he sat him down at the daïs in the great

hall. As he sat, the minstrels ceased their music and vanished, and the torches were quenched; doors and windows shook like thunder, and the very stones of the walls fell round him. The daïs began to quake, and the roof above opened.

As he sat thus dismayed, believing that he was betrayed by magic, he heard horses neigh. "Yet may I hope to joust," he said, better pleased. He looked out into a field, and there he saw two knights come riding with spear and shield; their armour was of rich purple, with gold garlands.

One of the knights rode into the hall. "Sir knight adventurous," he cried, "proud though you be, you must fight with us. Cunning indeed will you be if you win from us the lady who is so precious."

"I am ready to fight," answered Le Beau Disconus, and he leapt into his saddle, and rode against the knight. His might bore Mabon (for it was he) over his horse's tail: the hinder saddle-bow broke, and he fell. With that rode in Irayn fully-armed, fresh for the fight, and meaning with main and might to assail Sir Le Beau Disconus. But Le Beau Disconus was aware of him, and bore down on him with his spear, leaving Mabon where he had fallen. They brake their lances at the first stroke, and fell to with swords. As they fought, Mabon rose up from the ground, and ran to aid Irayn. But Le Beau Disconus fought both, and kept himself back warily.

When Irayn saw Mabon, he smote fiercely at Le Beau Disconus and struck his steed. But Sir Le Beau Disconus returned his blow, and shore off his

thigh, skin and bone and all: of no avail were his arms or his enchantments then!

Then Le Beau Disconus turned swiftly again to Mabon; and Mabon with a great blow brake the knight's sword. But Le Beau Disconus ran to Irayn, where he lay dying, and drew from him his sword, and rushed fiercely upon Mabon once more, and smote off his left arm with the shield.

"Hold, gentle knight," said Mabon, "and I will yield that to your will, and will take you to the fair lady. Through the wound from that sword I am undone, for I poisoned both it and mine, to make certain of slaying you."

"I will have none of your gifts, were I to win all this world by them," said Le Beau Disconus. "Lay on. One of us shall die."

Then they fell to again, and so fiercely did Le Beau Disconus fight that in a little while he cleft Mabon's head and helmet in twain.

When Mabon was slain, he ran to where he had left Irayn, meaning to cleave his head also. But Irayn was not there; he had been borne away, whither La Beau Disconus did not know. He sought him everywhere, and when he found him not, he believed that he was caught in a snare, and fell on his knees and prayed.

As he prayed a marvel came to pass. In the stone wall a window opened, and a great dragon issued therefrom. It had the face of a woman, fair and young; her body and wings shone like gold; her tail was loathly, and her paws grim and great.

"A window opened in the wall, and a great dragon issued therefrom."

Le Beau Disconus' heart sank within him, and he trembled. Ere he could think, the dragon clasped him by the neck and kissed him; and lo! as it kissed him, the tail and wings fell from it, and he saw before him the fairest lady that ever he looked upon.

"Gentle knight," she said, "you have slain the two magicans, my foes, who would have done me to death. Many men have they used shamefully with their enchantments. They changed me into a dragon, and bade me keep that shape till I had kissed Sir Gawain or some other knight of kin to Sir Gawain. You have saved my life: I will give you fifteen castles and myself for wife, if it be King Arthur's will."

Then was Le Beau Disconus glad and blythe, and leapt on his horse and rode back to Sir Lambard to bring him these good tidings; and presently there came to him from the palace the lady herself, richly clad, and all the people of the town made a fair procession in her train. Every knight in Synadown did her homage and fealty as was due to her.

Seven nights did they abide in the castle with Lambard, and then Sir Le Beau Disconus returned with the fair lady to King Arthur, and at his court gave thanks to God for their adventures. King Arthur gave the lady to Le Beau Disconus for wife; and the joy of that bridal can be told in no tale or song. Lords and ladies, fair and rich, came thereto, and there was a great feast of all that man could devise. Forty days they feasted at Arthur's court, and then rode to their own country, and abode there in much joy and happiness to their lives' end.

King Horn

I. Horn is Cast Away

LISTEN, all, and be joyous. I will tell you a tale of good King Murry and his son Horn.

Murry was King of Suddenne in the west country, a wise King whom all his subjects honoured. Godhild was his Queen, and no woman of that day was lovelier than she. Their son was named Horn; and when Horn was fifteen years old, the sun shone and the rain fell on no fairer boy. White as a lily was his skin, rosy red his cheeks. His courage was as high as any man's, and in all things he was courteous and debonair.

Twelve squires, each one the son of a man of noble birth, were set to be Horn's companions. Athulf was the best and truest of them, and dearest to Horn's heart; and one Fikenhild was the basest among them.

It pleased King Murry, on a certain summer's day, to ride, as was his wont, by the sea shore, with but two comrades. Suddenly, as they rode, they came

upon a strange sight. There before them on the edge of the waves lay fifteen ships beached, full of fierce Saracens; and many other Saracens went busily to and fro upon the shore, as if to make ready for battle.

"What seek you here, pagan men?" cried Murry at that sight. "What wares do you bring to this my land of Suddenne?" For he thought them to be merchants from a far land.

"We are come to slay all your folk who believe in Christ," answered one of them; "and that we will do right soon. As for you, you go not hence alive."

Thereat Murry was sorely troubled in heart. Nevertheless, he made no sign of fear. He and his two companions, with bold mien, leapt down from their horses, to fight more readily, and drew their swords, and fell upon the pagans. Many a stout blow they dealt; many a Saracen felt the strength of their arms: but for all their might and valour, they were but three against a host. From every side the enemy fell upon them unceasingly, and in a little time they lay there dead upon the sand. Then the Saracens left their ships and spread over the whole of Suddenne, slaying and burning and laying waste wheresoever they came. None might live, were he stranger or friend or native of the land, unless he foreswore the Christian faith and became a pagan.

Of all women in those days Godhild the Queen was saddest. Her kingdom was lost, her husband cruelly slain, and all her days were filled with grief. But

worse befell her, for on a certain day the Saracens came suddenly and took Horn prisoner and carried him away. Godhild escaped, and in her dire distress fled alone to a distant cave, and there lay hid, worshipping her God in secret, and praying that He would save her son from harm.

Horn and his companions—for all his twelve squires had been captured with him—seemed in sorry case. The savage pagans were for killing all Christians: some would have slain Horn outright; others would have flayed the prisoners alive. But the chief Emir of the Saracens wished to have no innocent blood on his hands, and spake out boldly.

"We might well slay you, Horn," he said; "you are young and fair and strong, and will grow yet stronger. Perchance, if we spare you now, you will some day return and be avenged upon us, when you have come to your full power. Yet we ourselves will not put you to death; the guilt shall not be on us, but on the sea. To the sea will we give you and your comrades; the sea shall be your judge, to save or drown you as it will."

Weeping and wringing their hands, Horn and his comrades were led down to the seashore. There a boat was made ready for them, with oars but no rudder or sail. All their tears were vain: the Saracens forced them aboard, and turned the little craft adrift into the wide ocean.

The boat drove fast and far through the water, and fear came down upon those in it. Soon they were tossing haphazard upon the rushing waves, now rest-

ing forlornly, now praying for help, now rowing wildly, as if for their lives, if ever the violence of the sea abated for a moment. All that afternoon, and through the long dark night, they voyaged in cold and terror, till in the morning, as the day dawned, Horn looked up and was aware of land at a little distance.

"Friends," said he, "I have good tidings. Yonder I spy land; I hear the song of birds, and see grass growing. Be merry once more; our ship has come into safety."

They took their oars and rowed lustily. Soon the keel touched the shore, and they sprang out eagerly on to dry land, leaving the boat empty. The waves drew the little craft gently back to themselves, and it began to glide away into the great sea.

"Go now from us, dear boat," cried Horn lovingly to it, as he saw it drawn away; "farewell, sail softly, and may no wave do you harm. When you come to Suddenne greet kindly all my kin, if there be any left alive there, and most of all my mother, the good Queen Godhild. Say that Christ, Heaven's King, hath brought me safe to land."

The boat floated slowly away, and Horn wept sorely at parting from it. Then they all turned their faces inland, and left the sea behind them, and set forth to seek whatsoever fortune might bring them in this unknown, new land upon which they had been cast.

II. Horn is dubbed Knight

The country to which Horn and his comrades had come was called Westerness: Aylmer the Good was King of it. But of that the wanderers knew nought as yet.

They journeyed far over hill and dale, ignorant of the way, and seeing no living man, until, as the day drew to an end, there met them Aylmer the King himself.

"Whence do you come, friends?" asked he. "Who are you that are so fair and straight of body? Never saw I a company so goodly, in all my kingdom of Westerness!"

Horn spoke up for them all, for he was wisest and bravest, and most skilled in the use of courteous words.

"We are from Suddenne, sire, of good lineage and Christian faith. The paynim came to our land, and slew my father and many others, and drove us from our homes. We thirteen whom you see were set adrift in a boat, to be the sport of the sea; a day and a night have we travelled without sail or rudder, and our boat brought us to this land. We are in your hands, sire: slay us, or keep us bound as prisoners; do with us as you will."

The good King was no ungentle boor: he spoke them fair and graciously.

"Tell me, child," he said, "what is your name?

"'Yonder I spy land."

No harm shall come to you at my hands, whosoever you be."

"Horn am I called, sire."

"Horn, child, you are well and truly named; your fame shall ring like a horn over dale and hill. Now, Horn, come with me. You and your comrades shall abide at my court."

They set out for the King's palace. When they were come thither, Aylmer entrusted them to his steward, Athelbrus, whom he charged to bring them up in knightly ways.

"Steward," he said, "take Horn whom I have found, and his comrades, and teach them all your knowledge; make them learn the craft of wood and stream, the art of playing the harp, and of singing, and the manner of carving before me, and of serving my cup. Let them be instructed in the control of steeds in the fray, and in all manner of arms."

So Horn and his twelve companions were added to Aylmer's household, and taught all that squires of kings should know. But Horn was to come to greater things than this. He learnt quickly, and became beloved by every one; and most of all, Rimenhild, the King's daughter, loved him from the day when she first set eyes on him. Her love for him grew daily stronger and stronger, though she durst speak no word of it to him, for she was a princess, and he only a squire rescued by chance from the sea.

At length Rimenhild could hide her love no longer. She sent for Athelbrus the steward, and bade him

bring Horn to her bower. But he, guessing her secret from her wild looks, was unwilling to send Horn to her, fearing the King's displeasure; and he bade Athulf, Horn's dearest companion, go to the princess instead, hoping either that the princess would not know him from Horn, for she had as yet spoken to neither of them, and they were much alike in face and mien, or that by this plan she would see the folly of her desire.

Athulf came to Rimenhild's bower, and she knew not that he was not Horn, and received him lovingly. But soon the trick was made plain, for Athulf, as beseems a loyal heart, could not hear himself praised above all other squires at Aylmer's court, and vowed that Horn was far fairer and better than he. Then Rimenhild in a rage sent him from her, and bade Athelbrus bring Horn to her without more ado. And thus at last Horn came before the princess.

"King's daughter," said he with reverence and courtesy, "Athelbrus, the steward, bade me come to you here where you sit with your hand-maidens. Say what you would have me do."

Rimenhild rose, answering nothing till she had taken him by the hand, and made him sit by her, and embraced him lovingly. "Welcome, Horn," she said; "you are so fair that I cannot but love you. Take me to wife; have pity on my love, and plight your troth to me."

Horn knew not what to say. "Princess," he began at last, "may Heaven give you joy and prosperity. I am too lowly for such a wife as you. I am but a

thrall and a foundling, and owe all that I have to the King your sire. It were no meet wedding between a thrall and the King's daughter."

At those words Rimenhild fell into a swoon; and Horn was filled with pity and love at the sight, and took her in his arms, and kissed her.

"Dear lady," he said, "be brave. Help me to win knighthood at the hands of my lord the King; if I be dubbed knight my thraldom is ended, and I am free to love you, as I do in my heart already." For Horn had long loved the princess secretly, but dared not hope that she would give him her love in turn.

Rimenhild came to her senses as he spoke. "Horn," she said, "it shall be as you wish. Ere fourteen days have passed you shall be made a knight."

Thereupon she sent for Athelbrus again, and bade him pray the King Aylmer to dub Horn a knight; and, to be brief, Horn was speedily knighted, and, asking the King's leave, himself knighted in turn his twelve companions.

As soon as he was knighted, Rimenhild called him to her; and Athulf, his dear comrade, went with him into her presence.

"Sir Horn, my knight," she said, "sit by me here. See, it is time to fulfil your word. Take me for your wife."

"Nay, Rimenhild," answered Horn; "that may not be yet. It is not enough that I am knighted. I must prove my knighthood, as all men do, in combat with some other knight. I must do a deed of prowess

in the field for love of you: then if I win through with my life, I will return and take you to wife."

"Be it so, Horn. Now take from me this carven ring of gold. On it is wrought: 'Be true to Rimenhild.' Wear it always on your finger, for my love's sake. The stone in it has such grace that never need you fear any wound nor shrink from any combat, if you do but wear this ring, and look steadfastly upon it, and think of me. And you, Athulf, you too, when you have proven your knighthood, shall have such another ring also. Sir Horn, may Heaven bless and keep you, and bring you safe to me again."

With that Horn kissed her, and received her blessing, and went away to prove his knighthood in brave feats of arms.

III. Horn the Knight Errant

When Horn had saddled his great black horse, and put on his armour, he rode forth to adventure, singing gaily. Scarce had he gone a mile when he spied by the seashore a ship, beached, and filled with heathen Saracens.

"What do you bring hither?" asked Horn. "Whence do you come?"

The pagans saw that he was but one man, and they were many, and answered boldly, "We are come to win this land, and slay all its folk."

At that Horn gripped his sword, and his blood ran hot. He sprang upon the Saracen chief and smote him with all his strength, so that he cleft the man's

"Horn took her in his arms and kissed her."

head from off his shoulders. Then he looked at the ring which Rimenhild had given him; and immediately such might came upon him that in a trice he slew full five score of the pagans. They fled in terror before him, and few of those whom he did not slay at the first onset escaped.

Horn set the head of the Saracen leader on the point of his sword, and rode back to Aylmer's court. When he had come to the King's palace, he went into the great hall, where the King and all his knights sat.

"King Aylmer," he cried, "and you, his knights, hear me. To-day, after I was dubbed knight, I rode forth and found a ship by the shore, filled with outlandish knaves, fierce Saracens, who were for slaying you all. I was fain to set upon them; my sword failed not, and I smote them to the ground. Lo, here is the head of their chief."

Men marvelled at Horn's prowess, and the King gave him words of praise. But not yet did Horn dare speak of his love for Rimenhild.

On the morrow, at dawn, King Aylmer went a-hunting in the forest, and Horn's twelve companions rode with him. But Horn himself did not go to the chase; he sought instead to tell his lady Rimenhild of his deeds, and went to her tower secretly, thinking to hear her joy in the feats he had done. But he found her weeping bitterly.

"Dear love," he said, "why do you weep?"

"Alas, Horn, I have had an evil dream," she answered. "I dreamed that I went fishing, and saw my

net burst. A great fish was taken in it, and I thought to have drawn him out safely; but he broke from my hands, and rent the meshes of the net. It is in my mind that this dream is of ill omen for us, Horn, and that the great fish signifies you yourself, whereby I know that I am to lose you."

"Heaven keep this ill hap from us, dear princess," said Horn. "Nought shall harm you, I vow; I take you for my own for ever, and plight my troth to you here and now."

But though he seemed to be of good cheer, he too was stirred by this strange dream, and had evil forebodings.

Meanwhile Fikenhild, riding with King Aylmer by the River Stour, was filled with envy of Horn's great deeds against the Saracens; and at last he said to the King, "King Aylmer, hear me. This Horn, whom you knighted yesterday for his valour in slaying the Saracens, would fain undo you. I have heard him plotting to kill you and take Rimenhild to wife. Even now, as we ride here by the river, he is in her bower —he, Horn, the foundling, is with your daughter, the Princess Rimenhild, as often he is. Go now, and take him, and drive him out of your land for his presumption." For Fikenhild had set a watch on Horn, and found out the secret of his love for Rimenhild.

Thereupon King Aylmer turned his horse, and rode home again, and found Horn with Rimenhild, even as Fikenhild had said.

"Get you hence, Horn," he cried in anger, "you base foundling; forth out of my daughter's bower,

away with you altogether! See that you leave this land of Westerness right speedily; here is no place nor work for you. If you flee not soon, your life is forfeit."

Horn, flushed with rage, went to the stable, and set saddle on his steed, and did on his arms; his chain mail he laced securely, and girt on his sharp sword; and so fierce was his mien that none dared withstand him or say him nay.

When all was ready for his going, he sought out Rimenhild.

"Your dream was true, dear love," he said. "The fish has torn your net, and I go from you. But I will put a new ending to the dream; fear not. Now fare you well; the King your father has cast me out of his realm, and I must needs seek adventure in other lands. Seven years will I wander, and it may be that I shall win such fortune as shall bring me back to sue honourably for you. But if at the end of seven years I have not come again to Westerness, nor sent word to you, then do you, if you so will, take another man for husband in my stead, and put me out of your heart. Now for the last time hold me in your arms and kiss me good-bye."

So Horn took his leave. But before he went away from Aylmer's court, he charged Athulf his friend to watch over Rimenhild and guard her from harm. Then he set forth on his horse, and rode down to the sea, and took ship to sail away alone from Westerness.

IV. Horn in Exile

Ere Horn had sailed long, the wind rose, and the ship drove blindly before it for many leagues, till at length it was cast up on land. Horn stepped out on to the beach, and there before him saw two princes, whose names (for they spoke him fair and greeted him in friendly sort) were Harild and Birild.

"Whence are you?" they asked, when they had told him who they were. "What are you called?"

Horn thought it wise to hide his real name from them, lest it should come to Aylmer's ears, and his anger reach Horn even in this distant land. "I am called Cuthbert," he answered, "and I am come far from the west in this little ship, seeking profitable adventure and honour."

"Well met, Sir Knight," said Harild. "Come now to our father the king: you shall do knightly deeds in his service."

They led him to King Thurston their father; and when Thurston saw that Horn was a man of might, skilled in arms, and a true knight, he took him into his service readily.

So Horn—or Cuthbert, as they knew him—abode at Thurston's court, and won honour in tournaments and in serving the King in battle. But no great and notable thing befell him until the coming of Christmas.

It was King Thurston's custom to make each Christmas a great feast, lasting many days. To this

feast Horn was bidden, with all the other knights of the court. Great mirth and joy was there that Yule-tide; the minstrels sang songs of gladness, and the music of harps and psalteries sounded ceaselessly; all men feasted with light hearts.

Suddenly, about noon-day, the great doors of the King's hall were flung open, and a monstrous giant strode in. He was fully armed, in pagan raiment, and his mien was proud and terrible.

"Sit still, Sir King," he roared, as Thurston turned to him. "Hearken to my tidings. I am come hither with a Saracen host, and my comrades are close at hand. From them I bring a challenge; and this is the challenge. One of us alone will fight any three of your knights, in a certain place. If your three slay our one, then we will depart and leave you and your land unscathed. But if our one champion slays your three, then will we take your land for our own, and deal with it and you as it pleases us. To-morrow at dawn we will make ready for the combat; and if you take not up this challenge, and send your appointed knights to battle, then will we burn and lay waste and slay all over this realm."

Thereupon he turned, and stalked out of the hall, saying never another word.

"This is a sorry hap," said King Thurston, when the Saracen had gone and left them all aghast. "Yet must we take up this challenge. Cuthbert," he said, turning to Horn, "you have heard this pagan boast; will you be one of our three champions? Harild and Berild, my sons, shall be the other two,

and may God prosper all three! But alas! It is of little avail. We are all dead men!"

But Horn felt no fear. He started up from the board when he heard the King's sorrowful words. "Sir King," he cried, "this is all amiss. It is not to our honour that three Christian knights should fight this one pagan. I alone will lay the giant low, with my own sword, unaided."

Thurston hoped little of this plan, but none the less he agreed to it; and when the next day came, he arose betimes, and with his own hands helped to arm Horn; and having made ready, he rode down to the field of battle with him.

There, in a great open space, stood the Saracen giant awaiting them, his friends standing by him to abide the issue of the combat.

They made little tarrying, but fell to right soon. Horn dealt mightily with the giant; he attacked him at once, and showered blows upon him, so that the pagan was hard pressed, and begged for a breathing space.

"Let us rest awhile, Sir Knight," he said. "Never suffered I such blows from any man's hand yet, except of King Murry, whom I slew in Suddenne."

At that dear name Horn's blood ran hot within him: before him he saw the man who had slain his father and had driven himself from his kingdom. He fell to more furiously than ever, and drove hard at the giant beneath the shield; and as he smote he cast his eye upon the ring Rimenhild had given him. Therewith his strength was redoubled; so

straight and strong was the blow, so true his arm, that he pierced the giant to the heart, and he fell dead upon the ground.

When they saw their champion slain, the Saracens were stricken with panic. They turned and fled headlong to their ships, Thurston and his knights pursuing. A great battle was fought by the ships: Harild and Berild were slain in the mellay, but Horn did such deeds of prowess that every pagan was killed.

There was great lamentation over the two princes. Their bodies were brought to the King's palace and laid in state, and lastly buried in a great church built for them of lime and stone; and for many days all men mourned them.

V. Horn's Return

There was now no heir to Thurston's kingdom, since Harild and Berild were slain; and in a little time, when the King's grief abated, he bethought him of what should befall his people when his time came to die.

"Cuthbert," he said to Horn one day when he had pondered long over these things, "there is no heir to my kingdom, now that my dear sons have fallen in the fight against the Saracens. There is but my daughter Reynild to come after me. Will you wed her, and be King and rule this land after my death?"

Horn was sorely tempted. But he looked on his

ring, and remembered Rimenhild. "Sir King," he answered, "you do me great honour, and I give you thanks. But I am under a vow, and cannot wed the lady Reynild."

He would say no more, but was firm in his purpose; and King Thurston had to be content with his loyal service only. For seven years Horn abode at Thurston's court, serving in arms under him and winning great fame by his knightly deeds. No word did he send to Rimenhild, nor received tidings of any kind from Westerness.

About the end of the seventh year Horn chanced to be riding in the forest, when he met a page journeying as if towards Thurston's palace.

"What do you here?" he said. "Whither do you go?"

"Sir," answered the page, "I have a message for one Sir Horn from Sir Athulf in Westerness, where Aylmer is King. The Lady Rimenhild is to be wedded on Sunday to King Modi of Reynes, and I am sent to bring tidings thereof to Sir Horn. But I can find him nowhere, nor hear even so much as his name, though I have wandered far and wide."

At this heavy news Horn hid his name no longer. He told the page who he was, and bade him go back with all speed, and say to Rimenhild that she need no longer mourn: her true lover would save her ere Sunday came.

The page returned blithely with this message. But he never delivered it, for as he went back he was by chance drowned; and Rimenhild, hearing no word

of Horn, despaired. Athulf, too, watching long for Horn each day on a tower of Aylmer's palace, gave up hope.

But Horn was not idle or forgetful. When he had despatched the page, as he thought, safely back to Athulf and Rimenhild, he went straight to King Thurston, and without more pretence told him his true name and all the story of the adventures.

"Sire," he said, at the end, "I have served you well. Grant me reward for my service, and help me to win Rimenhild. See, you offered me the hand of your daughter Reynild; that I might not accept, for I was pledged already; but perchance my comrade Athulf might be deemed an honourable suitor. If you will but help me, Athulf shall be Reynild's husband; that I vow. Sire, give me your aid."

"Be it so," said Thurston, loath to lose Horn, but glad to hear of a knight waiting to wed the lady Reynild.

Straightway a levy of knights was made, and Horn set forth in a ship with a brave body of fighting men. The wind blew favourably, and ere long they came to Westerness. Even as they touched the shore, the bells ceased ringing for the marriage of Rimenhild to King Modi.

Horn saw how late they had arrived, and that he must needs act warily, if he would save Rimenhild in the midst of the rejoicings over her wedding. He left his men on board ship, and landed alone, setting out to walk to the palace, where the wedding-feast was about to be held.

As he walked thus, he met a palmer, clad in pilgrims' weeds? "Whither go you, Sir Palmer?" he asked.

"I have just come from a wedding," he answered, "from the wedding of Rimenhild, the King's daughter; and sad and sorrowful she seemed to be, in truth, on this wedding day."

"Now Heaven help me, palmer, but I will change clothes with you. Take you my robe, and give me your long cloak. To-day I will drink at that wedding-feast, and some shall rue the hour that I sit at the board with them."

Without more ado he changed clothes with the palmer, taking also his staff and scrip, and staining his face till it was like that of a toil-worn traveller. Then he set out for the palace once more.

He came soon to the gates, where a porter strove to bar his entrance. But Horn broke in the wicket-gate, and entered, and threw the man over the drawbridge, so that his ribs were broken. None other stood in Horn's way, and he went into the great hall, and took his place in a lowly seat among the beggars and poor men.

As he looked about him, he saw, at a little distance, Rimenhild, weeping and lamenting sorely. Athulf he did not see, for he was still keeping watch in the tower for Horn's return.

Before long Rimenhild rose from her seat and began to minister to the guests, according to custom, pouring them out wine and ale in horn beakers. When she came low down among the guests, Horn spoke to her.

"Fair Queen," he said, "serve us also; we beggars are athirst."

She laid down the vessel she bore, and took a great gallon cup, and filled it with brown ale, and offered it him, thinking him a glutton. "Take this cup," she said, "and drink your fill. Never saw I so forward a beggar."

"I will not drink your ale, lady," answered Horn, for he was minded to let her know who he was, and yet to hide himself from all others at the feast. "Give me wine; I am no beggar. I am a fisherman, come hither to search my nets, and see what I have caught. Pledge me now yourself and drink to Horn of horn."

Thus by his strange words he thought to recall to her that dream she had formerly dreamed, of a great fish that escaped from her net.

Rimenhild looked on him, and hope and fear sprang up in her heart together. She knew not what his saying about his nets and "Horn of horn" might mean. With a steadfast look, she took her drinking-horn, and filled it with wine, and gave it to Horn.

"Drink your fill, friend," she said, "and tell me if you have seen aught of this Horn of whom you seem to speak."

Horn drained the beaker, and as he put it down dropped into it the ring that Rimenhild had given him so long ago.

When Rimenhild saw the ring she knew it at once. She made an excuse, and left the feast, and went to

her bower. In a little time she sent for the palmer secretly, and asked him where he got the ring.

"Queen," said Horn, "in my travels I met one named Horn. He gave me this ring to bring to you; it was on shipboard I met him, and he lay dying."

He said this to prove if her love were still constant to him. But Rimenhild believed him, and when she heard him say that Horn was dead, became as one mad with grief. Then Horn, seeing how strong was her love, threw off his palmer's cloak, and showed her the false stain on his face, and told her that he was in very truth Horn, her lover.

When their first joy at meeting again was over, Horn told the princess of the men he had brought with him in his ship. Secretly they sent for Athulf, and when he too had learnt all Horn's tidings, a message was sent to the men in the ship, who came to the palace speedily, and were admitted by a private door. Then all the company of them broke suddenly into the banquet-hall, and fell upon those there, and slew many; but Modi and Fikenhild escaped and fled from Westerness.

VI. The King of Suddenne

When they had made an end of slaying, Horn revealed himself to Aylmer, and reproached him for giving his daughter in marriage to Modi, whom she did not love; and Aylmer, when he heard of Horn's deeds—for the fame which Horn had won under the

"He threw off the cloak and told her that he was Thorn."

name of Cuthbert had gone into many lands—could not but feel sorrow that he had sent Horn away in anger seven years ago; and he begged Horn to stay at his court and wed Rimenhild, for the marriage with Modi was not fully complete when Horn and his men broke up the feast.

"Nay, I am of royal blood," answered Horn. "You thought me a foundling and despised me. For that insult you formerly put upon me, I vow I will not take Rimenhild for my wife until I have won my kingdom of Suddenne back from the Saracens, and avenged my father King Murry, whom they slew. I am a King's son; I will be a King before my wife shall come to me."

Aylmer could not gainsay Horn in his purpose, and once more Horn set out on his wanderings. With him went Sir Athulf and a band of brave knights. They took ship and for five days sailed the sea with a favouring wind, till at last, late at night on the fifth day, they came to the shores of Suddenne.

Horn and Athulf landed, to spy out the country. A little way inland they came upon an old knight sleeping by the wayside; on his shield was the device of a cross.

Horn woke him gently. "Tell me, Sir Knight, who are you?" he asked. "Your shield shows that you are a Christian; but this land is ruled by pagans, as I have been told."

"I am a Christian, truly," said the old knight. "But I serve the pagans perforce. They hold the

power, and I must needs fight for them, against my will. This land is in a sorry case through their dominion. If King Murry's son, Horn, were here, perchance we might drive the pagans out. But I know not where to find him, nor where my own son is; for Athulf, my son, was Horn's dearest companion."

Such changes had the long absence wrought in Horn and Athulf and the old knight that they did not recognise one another. But at these words Horn and Athulf knew for certain that they were indeed in Suddenne. They told the old knight who they were, and learnt that Horn's mother, the Queen Godhild, was still alive, and many knights in the land besides, desirous of driving the Saracens out, but unable to fulfil their desire through lack of a leader and of men.

Horn forthwith summoned his men from the ships, and blew his trumpet for battle, and attacked the Saracens. There was a great fight, but before long the heathen were defeated, and those who were not slain were driven altogether out of the land. Then Horn set to work to build churches, and castles to guard them, and held a great feast, at which he and Queen Godhild, and Athulf and his father, with all their brave knights, made merry for many hours.

Thus Horn came into his kingdom again; but he had yet to punish Fikenhild the traitor, who first separated him from Rimenhild (for this Aylmer had told him), and King Modi, who had sought to wed her against her will.

Fikenhild, when Horn came back to Westerness in time to save Rimenhild from Modi, had fled; but he still plotted deep treachery in his heart. By bribes and favours he won many knights to follow him; and he built himself a great castle of stone, set on a rock, surrounded on all sides with water, so that none could come at it easily. Then by stealth one night he carried off Rimenhild, and married her in this castle, holding a great feast at sunrise to celebrate the marriage.

Horn knew nought of this by word of mouth or letter. But in a dream he beheld Rimenhild: she seemed to him as though shipwrecked, calling upon his name; but when she tried to swim to him, Fikenhild appeared and prevented her.

When he awoke, Horn told Athulf this vision; and when they had thought upon the lore of dreams, they agreed that it meant that Rimenhild was in Fikenhild's sea-girt castle, the fame of which was known to all men. Straightway they took a ship and sailed to the land hard by where the castle lay.

There a certain knight named Arnoldin, cousin of Athulf, met them, and told them that Fikenhild had just wedded Rimenhild, and the wedding-feast was now beginning.

They could not come nigh the castle openly as enemies, for none could approach it across the water unless those within were willing to let him enter. But Horn and some of his knights disguised themselves as harpers, hiding their swords under long cloaks. They took a boat and rowed under the walls

of the banqueting-hall, and there they played and sang merrily, till Fikenhild heard them, and called them in to the feast.

When they had come into the hall, they began to sing again, at Fikenhild's bidding. Horn sought to stand near Rimenhild, and sang to her a lay of forsaken love. The song smote her to the heart, and she fell into a swoon. Horn looked once more, for the last time, upon the ring she had given him long ago, and then, with a shout, he and his companions fell upon Fikenhild and his men, and slew every one of them.

The tale is soon told. Horn made Arnoldin King in Fikenhild's castle. Then he set sail for Modi's kingdom: Modi he slew, and made Athelbrus the old steward King in his stead. Athulf he sent to Thurston's court, where in a little time he married the princess Reynild; and Horn went back to his kingdom of Suddenne, and there made Rimenhild his Queen. Long and happily they reigned in true love and in fear of God; now both are dead; may they be taken into God's Heaven, and may Christ lead us thither also.

The Seven Wise Masters

WHEN Diocletian, Emperor of Rome, was growing old, his mind ran upon the fate of his kingdom after his death. His wife was dead. His eldest son Florentin was but seven years of age, and as yet knew nothing of wisdom and government. After long thought, the Emperor called to him the Seven Wise Masters of Rome, and asked their advice. Each Master, as he questioned him, rose in turn, and declared that he would teach the prince some one branch of learning, if he were entrusted to him. But Diocletian was not satisfied; his son must know all the arts, if he were to rule the great empire of Rome. One teacher would not suffice; and in the end, Florentin was set to learn at the hands not of one, but of all the Seven Wise Masters, so that he might gain something of the wisdom of each.

For seven years Florentin studied under the Wise Masters. Towards the end of that time, they made a plan to test his knowledge. His bed was a great one, set on four posts. One night under each post they laid four ivy leaves pressed together, saying nothing to Florentin of their device.

Florentin went to bed as usual. But when he woke in the morning, and his Seven Masters came, as was their wont, to wait upon him, he looked wildly upon them. He cast his eyes up and down, and peered on either side of his bed, like a man sore afraid.

"Why do you look thus?" asked the first Wise Master, Baucillas by name. "Are you afraid?"

"I fear no man," answered Florentin. "But I marvel greatly at a thing I see. This house is strange to me; either the sky has sunk lower, or the floor has risen on high, since last I saw the light."

"Certes," quoth the fourth Master, Maladas, "that would be a wonderful thing, if it were so. But it can in no wise be so."

"Yet I lie higher to-day, by four leaves' thickness, than I lay yestermorn," answered Florentin.

With that the Masters were satisfied; they knew that the prince had perceived even so little a change in his bed, and that he had profited by their teaching.

Now while Florentin was being taught by the Seven Wise Masters, the Emperor had married again. The new Empress was young and lovely, and before they had been married long, Diocletian loved her so fondly that he forgot Florentin altogether. But the praises of the young prince, of his beauty and learning, were in every man's mouth, and speedily came to the hearing of the Empress, who besought the Emperor, and at last persuaded him to summon her stepson back to Rome.

"Wise Men," said the Emperor's messenger, when he came into the presence of the Seven Masters, "our lord the Emperor greets you. He bids you come to him within three days, bringing with you his dear son."

The messenger was nobly entertained by the prince and the Masters. But the wise men were sorely distressed at the tidings he brought, for they feared they knew not what from this sudden summons. Hastily they took their books and instruments of magic, and consulted the signs of the stars and the moon to see whether the journey to Rome could be safely undertaken; and the fifth Wise Master, Cato, found that a terrible thing was foretold.

"It is the prince's stepmother," he said, "who has contrived that the prince should be called to Rome. He is not her son, and she wishes him ill. Through her magic arts she knows that if the Prince Florentin does but open his lips when he comes to court, he will die; and if he dies, we too shall surely be put to death."

"Master," said Florentin, "I also have consulted the stars, and I read them as you do. But I read this also; I read that if I keep silence for seven days and seven nights, and pass that time without harm, no other evil shall befall me."

"This is a great marvel," said Baucillas, when he had looked at the stars; "it is even as the prince says. We must take counsel to overcome the Empress."

"I will keep silence, even as I have said," answered Florentin; "and you, dear Masters, you con-

trive that each one of you is able to save my life for a day. Thus shall I live out the seven days securely, and no ill shall come upon us."

"If it may be, I will save your life for a day," vowed Baucillas; and the rest promised the same, each taking a day upon himself.

The next day the prince set out for Rome. When he came thither, he went with his Master Baucillas into the Emperor's presence, and did a reverence, but said never a word.

"Dear son, how do you fare?" asked the Emperor.

Florentin bowed low, but answered him never a word.

"What is this, Master Baucillas?" asked the Emperor angrily. "Why does my son not speak? Is this all your teaching, that he cannot open his mouth? You have done your work ill: look to it that my wrath does not fall upon you."

"Sire," quoth Baucillas, "it is in truth a marvel. Yesterday, I vow, he spoke as well as any of us. Without doubt he will speak soon, and his words will show you how wise our teaching has been."

But the Emperor could not make Florentin utter a word, and he grew more and more angry. As he raged against Baucillas, who bore all his wrath meekly, knowing the true cause of the prince's silence, the Empress came into the hall, eager to see if the prince had spoken. But she found him standing as still and dumb as a stone, and knew that he was safe unless she could make him speak. She went to him graciously, and greeted him with soft and fair words,

welcoming him as her dear husband's son whom she had longed to see.

But Florentin answered never a word.

Then the Empress saw that this device too had failed; and she made as if she had received a sore insult, and turned to the Emperor in wrath.

"I have greeted your son in friendly wise, sire," she cried; "but he spurns me. His mouth is stuck fast; he will not say a word."

"He will give me no answer," said the Emperor. "I know not what ails him."

"Perchance if I speak him fairly and gently, alone, he will not be afraid to answer," said the Empress, a new plan coming into her mind.

"Take him apart, dear Queen," replied the Emperor. "Do with him as you please; only make him speak."

The Empress took Florentin by the hand, and led him to her chamber; and there, alone with him, she told him that a great love for him had sprung up in her, so that she forgot her husband the Emperor, and loved only him, her stepson. Thus she thought to make him speak, if only in anger at what she told him.

But all her pretended love could not bring Florentin to open his mouth. His lips were closed fast, and he uttered no word.

Seeing that this plot also had failed, the Empress tried yet another device. She rent her garments, and tore her hair, and cried loudly for help. When her guards came, she bade them seize the prince, for

he had become mad, she said, and had set upon her in a frenzy, and would have slain her.

Florentin was brought by the guards before Diocletian, and the Empress told her false tale once more; but the prince spoke no word.

"Call my tormentor," cried the Emperor in great wrath, for he believed his wife's tale, and saw that Florentin would not deny it; and when the tormentor came, "take my son," he commanded, "bind him, and take him to the place where thieves are hanged, and there scourge and afterwards hang him."

The tormentor bound the prince securely and prepared to lead him away. All the court looked on with wonder and pity, and at length certain great lords implored the King to have mercy.

"Sire," they said, "you do yourself little honour by slaying your son thus hastily. Let him at least live to see to-morrow's light; perchance by then he will speak. If not, then pass judgment on him."

"My lords," answered the King, "be it as you say." And he bade the guards keep the prince in prison till the morrow.

When Florentin was taken to his prison, the Empress perceived that her plan had failed for that day, and she feared that on the morrow some chance might again prevent the death of Florentin. She resolved to make sure that he should be hanged; and that night, when she was alone with the Emperor, she began to set about a new plot. She wept, and moaned, and wrung her hands, till Diocletian asked the cause of her grief.

"The Empress told her false tale once more."

"It is no wonder I grieve," she said; "you were better dead than take bad advice. You followed those who bade you spare Florentin, and you are stirring up for yourself great evil. You are like the vine tree that was cut down because of its young branch."

"I know you wish me well, and perchance you speak truly on this matter," said the Emperor, who dearly loved to hear tales and old fables. "What is this story of a vine tree?"

The Vine Tree

There was once a knight who had a fair arbour (began the Empress) in the midst of which, among the apple-trees, there stood a great and fruitful vine Early and late the knight walked by that vine, and took pride and joy in seeing the wide spread of its branches.

One spring the vine tree put forth a shoot, and the knight was filled with delight in watching it wax strong and grow tall. But on a certain day he came to the vine and saw the young shoot bent a little aside. A bough of the old tree overshadowed it, so that the sun did not fall upon it, and it grew crookedly.

"Go fetch an axe," said the knight to the gardener." "Hew down this great bough, and give the young shoot room."

The gardener did as he was bade, and the young shoot sprang up tall and strong; and it waxed so

great that in time it took all the nourishment of the old vine, which began to wither and die.

"See, sir," said the gardener to the knight, "all the virtue of the vine is gone into the new shoot."

"Faith if that be so," said the knight, "there is nought for it but to dig up the vine by the root."

Thus was the old tree wronged by the young one; the great vine came upon evil days, and the little shoot had the mastery.

. . . . . .

"Even so, sire," said the Empress, "this young shoot, Florentin, will cause your boughs to be hewn down, and your glory to diminish. Your power is spread wide now, but in time his will wax great, and bring you low."

"I vow it is true," cried Diocletian; "to-morrow he shall die, even though all men that live withstand me."

The next morning the Emperor called a knight to him.

"Go to the prison," he said. "Bid my tormentor put my son to the torture. He shall die to-day; but first we will try if we cannot make him speak."

They put the prince to the torture, but he spoke never a word. Then he was brought again to the Emperor. As he came into the great hall of the palace, he cast his eye sadly upon the Wise Master Baucillas, whom he spied there; but he said nothing.

But Baucillas had taken thought, and remembered his vow. As soon as Florentin was led before the Emperor, he came forward boldly.

"Sire, this is a new thing," he cried, "that you should slay your own son, guiltless and unheard."

"I have other sons," answered the Emperor. "And you Wise Masters have had Florentin in your charge this seven years; have you taught him nothing but to hold his tongue? Have you taught him to beat and wound my wife? He shall die, I say; and, by Heaven, so shall you, all seven of you, since you have done your work so sore amiss."

"Alas, sire, be not wroth," said Baucillas. "We have taught the prince well and truly, as you shall find ere long. And I dare wager my life that he wrought the lady Empress no harm."

"He will not speak," answered Diocletian; "and I saw my wife's garments torn and her hair rent, as if by him. Your words are vain, Baucillas."

Florentin was weeping, for he saw no hope of his life. But Baucillas still pleaded. "Sire, on your life do not slay your son. If you do, it may be with you even as with the knight who slew the hound that saved his son's life. All his days thereafter that knight grieved for what he had done in his haste."

"Tell me how that tale was," said the Emperor.

"What were the use, sire?" answered Baucillas. "Ere I could tell the half of it, the prince's life would be ended."

The Emperor was eager to hear the tale. He bade the guards take Florentin back to prison; and as soon as Baucillas knew that the prince was spared for a time, he began his tale.

The Knight and the Greyhound

There was once a rich and powerful knight who dwelt in all happiness and prosperity with his wife. They had a son, fair and strong, and he was but a twelvemonth old. There was nothing in the world the knight loved so well.

The knight had also a greyhound of great price; he loved this hound well, and trusted him more than all his other beasts; and the hound served him faithfully.

It chanced that one day in May a tournament was held near by, and the knight and all his household went to it, leaving the child at home with but two nurses. But the nurses, when they heard the drums and trumpets sounding for the tournament, and saw that they alone of the household remained at home, stole away to the lists secretly, and left the child unguarded.

In the court of the knight's castle stood an old tower, long fallen out of use; and in a crevice in its walls lived an adder, with its brood. The noise of the tournament woke this great serpent, and it crept out of its hole. Into the castle it wound its way, and came into the room where the child lay sleeping in its cradle. The adder drew near and yet nearer: the little babe seemed almost in its power. But the good greyhound lay in the room, and as the serpent crept in he rose and bristled in anger. The serpent paid no heed, but glided on

swiftly. In a trice the greyhound sprang upon the creature. They fought long; the serpent bit the hound, but he would not let it go. All over the room they struggled; the cradle was upset, and stood upon its pommel, so that the child lay under it, hidden safely, and slept quietly while the hound fought the enemy.

At length the adder was slain, and lay dead among the cradle clothes. The hound, sore wounded, stretched himself upon the floor; and the blood of both was upon the cradle clothes and the hangings of the chamber.

When the jousting was ended, the household came back. They found the greyhound in the chamber, weary and panting, and his eyes still wild from the fight. The two nurses, who came thither first, were sore afraid: they did not look for the child under the overturned cradle, and they saw it nowhere.

"Alas," they cried, "the greyhound is mad, and has killed the child."

They flew to the knight's wife, and brought her to see the hound. At the sight she gave a great cry, believing that her little son was dead.

The knight heard her cry, and hastened to her. "Dear wife, what ails you?" he asked.

"See," she said, "our babe is lost. This vile hound has slain our child: look at his eyes, and the torn cradle clothes. Of a surety it is as I say."

The faithful dog understood not the meaning of her words, but he knew his master, and struggled to his feet, wagging his tail painfully; and in his great

love for the master whose child he had saved, he rose and stood on his hind legs, and set his forefeet upon the knight's breast. But the knight, mad with rage and sorrow, drew his sword, and slew the hound in an instant.

"Take away the cradle," he cried. "I have lost my dear son, and the hound whom I trusted."

The nurses lifted the cradle and its clothes; and lo, underneath lay the child asleep, and hard by, the serpent, dead.

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"You may guess, sire," said Baucillas, "how the knight grieved when he saw what wrong he had done. It is said in the story that he went straightway out of his castle to a fish-pond, and there, for very sorrow, drowned himself. Even so, if you slay your son, you too will repent. This knight obeyed his wife without taking thought; he did not make inquiry whether she spoke truth or not. Even so may you act, sire, if you put your son to death in haste, while your anger is hot within you."

"Master Baucillas," said the Emperor, "no word of my wife's alone shall bring that to pass. Florentin shall not die to-day. I will inquire more concerning his deeds."

Thus Florentin was spared for another day. But the Empress was ill pleased, and considered how she might gain her will on the morrow. That night she spoke falsely to the Emperor: "What have you done, sire? Did you not see with your own eyes how I was like to die by your son's hand, and yet he is but cast

"The faithful dog struggled to his feet."

into prison again, unpunished? You are even as the boar who was beguiled to his death."

"I know not if what you say against my son be true, nor why you have enmity against him," said the Emperor. "But I would fain hear this tale of the boar; tell it me now."

The Tale of the Boar

There was a great boar (said the Empress) who lived in a forest, where were many trees, whose berries and nuts and fruit he was wont to eat. He loved especially one tree therein. Every day he came and stood under it, that he might eat the nuts that had fallen from it.

Now a certain herdsman of that forest knew of this boar, and feared him greatly, and dared not pasture his herd near the boar's tree. But it chanced one day that he lost his way, and found himself close to the tree. He was hungry, and picked up from the ground some of the nuts to eat. The nuts pleased him, and he eat his fill; and when he had eaten, he filled his hood with them. Even as he did so, the boar spied him, and came running at him in a rage. The herdsman made short work of climbing the tree; and there he sat upon a branch, not daring to come down. Below the boar whetted his tusks, and charged the tree madly, foaming at the mouth.

The tree was old and strong, but the herdsman feared lest the boar, by dint of many stout blows,

should at last fell it, or perchance shake him from his perch. He plucked the ripe nuts and cast them down, to see whether the beast would eat them and forget him. The boar eat greedily, but did not go from the tree. Then the herdsman tried yet another plan. He cast down more nuts, and, as the boar eat them, climbed from bough to bough and leant down, holding the tree with his legs and one hand. With the other hand he reached downwards stealthily, and scratched the boar's hide as he eat.

The boar had eaten well, and liked the scratching. He leant against the man's hand in pleasure; and before long he sank on his haunches, and fell asleep. Then the crafty herdsman drew his long knife from his belt, and stabbed the beast as he lay sleeping.

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"Even so, sire," said the Empress, "will you be beguiled and slain by the false words of your flatterers, and your son will be Emperor in your stead."

"By St. Bride, that shall not be," said the Emperor, his whole mind changed by the story. "Florentin shall do me no more harm. I will not be cozened into sleeping, as the boar was. Florentin shall die to-morrow."

As soon as it was day upon the morrow the Emperor bade his men go fetch his son and slay him. They led Florentin out of the town to the place of execution. But as they went the second Wise Master Ancillas met them, and remembered his vow to save

"He reached downwards and scratched the boar's hide."

the prince for a day. With all speed he ran to the Emperor, and begged him to have mercy.

"For all you say, good sir," answered Diocletian, "my son shall die. I gave him to you to teach, and you Wise Masters have but taken his speech away. You shall die too, all seven."

"Heaven have mercy on us," answered Ancillas. "Be not so angry, sire. You know not how it is with the prince. He has done no evil. If he loses his life, I pray there may befall you such a sorry fate as came upon Hippocras, that slew his cousin who had done no wrong, and himself died thereafter."

"You shall have no peace till I hear the fate of this Hippocras," said the Emperor.

"What avails it, sire?" said Ancillas. "Ere my tale were told, the prince would be dead. If I might save his life till to-morrow, I could tell this tale of Hippocras."

Straightway the King sent and forbade the guards to slay his son; and as soon as he heard that commandment given, Ancillas began his story.

The Physician and his Cousin

There was once a noble physician called Hippocras, who had a cousin who studied medicine under him. This cousin learnt readily, and speedily became as skilful a physician as Hippocras himself.

It chanced that the King of Hungary's son fell

sick of a strange malady which no leech of his own land could cure. In despair the King sent abroad into all the world to find physicians; and especially he begged Hippocras to come and cure his son. But Hippocras waxed old. It was a long journey from his home to Hungary, and he was loath to go. Instead of himself he sent his cousin, knowing that his skill would cure the prince if mortal man could avail at all, but believing in his heart that all was in vain.

The cousin rode to Hungary, and saw that the King's son was indeed sick almost to death; but, before long, by his skill, he found out the cause, and cured the boy. Great rewards were given him, and he returned home to Hippocras well pleased, and told him how he had fared.

Now Hippocras had guessed what ailed the King's son, and little thought that any man would avail to cure him. When he heard of his cousin's success, he was jealous, and took counsel with himself how he might be rid of this upstart, whose skill was so great —greater, it seemed, even than his own.

It was not long before he found occasion for his design. One day he was walking with his cousin in a fair meadow, bright with many a flower. Suddenly he stopped still, and cast his eyes upon the ground.

"Good cousin," quoth he, "here is a herb of great virtue. If it were digged up by the root, much good might come of it."

"Dear master, where is the herb?"

"Here," said Hippocras. "Look, it is at my feet. Kneel down on your knee, and dig it up and give it me; I will show you what virtue is in it."

The young man knelt down. As he stooped, Hippocras drew his sword and slew him, unarmed, unready. He buried the body there as it lay, and went home, and burned even his cousin's books, that no fame might come to the dead man, and no person be healed by his skill after his death.

Thus Hippocras was rid of his rival. But in a little while he himself fell ill of a disease which he could not cure. All his books and all his lore availed him naught. But his cousin, had he not been foully slain, could have healed him, for he had great skill in curing this very disease. And so, by the result of his own wickedness, Hippocras died.

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"Take warning, sire," said Ancillas; "do not let your son go to death; you will need him ere long. There are but a few who will withstand you so as you be in health; but if you do but grow weak, and have not your son to aid you, then will evil betide you."

"By my head, he shall not die," said Diocletian.

Thus again the Empress was defeated in her wicked plot. But that night once more she began to sob and weep, until the Emporer asked her the cause of her grief.

"Woe is me, sire," said she; "I grieve for you. You are lord and King, master of all this Empire, and you are about to come upon evil days. If these wise

men have their will, that villain your son will live. If you love him more than you love me, may the same fate befall you as came upon the man whose head was cut off by his own son."

"Tell me how that came to pass," said the Emperor.

The Thief and his Son

There was an Emperor of Rome (said the Empress) who loved riches right well. To keep his treasure safe, he caused a tower to be built wherein it was stored.

This Emperor had seven counsellors, even as you have these Seven Wise Masters, sire. It chanced that at a certain time, five of these masters were away from Rome. Of the other two, one was in charge of the treasure tower. The seventh was a rich man, who loved a merry life; and he spent his substance so readily and heedlessly that he had come well nigh to beggary. His money was all gone, his lands and castles sold; nought was left upon which he might feast and revel as of old.

In this evil plight he found a desperate remedy. He and his son one night broke into the treasure tower, and stole away from it great store of silver and gold. Thereafter they feasted and made merry until their gains were once more gone.

The wise master who guarded the treasure had seen the loss, though he could not discover the thief. To

make the treasure safe if the thief came again, he set a great cauldron of brass in the midst of the strong chamber in the tower, and filled it all with sticky glue, so that if a man fell therein he might in no wise escape.

Before long the seventh wise master and his son, in sore strait for money, came again. In at a hole he made in the tower wall the father crept, unsuspecting any trap, and straightway fell into the cauldron, and stuck there.

"Son," he cried, "I am lost. Flee, or you too are undone!"

"Alas, father, what shall I do? They will find you here, and know from you the rest of us, and slay all your family."

"There is nought for it," answered the father, "but that you should smite off my head. I must die if they find me, and assuredly they will find me; but if I die at your hands, and you bear away my head, I alone shall suffer, for they will not know who I am or who aided me. But oh, my son, if it so befall that you find occasion, give my head burial in a Christian grave."

The son was in great doubt. He saw no way to help his father, and he knew that if his father were caught and recognised, he himself and all their family would be put to death. Sorrowfully he bade his father farewell; then he drew his sword, and struck off his father's head, and made his escape, taking the head with him.

But when once he was free of danger he thought

little of his father's honour; he cared nought for his shameful death, and forgot that he had asked that his head should have Christian burial. As he ran from the tower, he cast the head from him into a well, and left it there.

On the morrow the treasurer came to the tower, and found there that he had indeed caught the robber, but might in no wise discover who he was, for the body was headless. But he contrived a cunning plan. He took the dead body, and had it set on a barrow and dragged through the streets of Rome by horses.

"Look well about you," he charged the guards who went with it, "and if any man or woman cries or starts back at the sight of this thing, seize them and bring them to me straightway, for surely they will be the heir of the dead man."

It was done as he bade; and it chanced that the wife and sister and son of the robber saw his body as it was dragged through the streets. At that sight the women cried aloud. But the crafty son knew what would befall them if their cry were noticed, and drawing his sword he smote himself in the thigh.

"Seize these women," cried the captain of the guard. "They are the kin of this dead thief; they cried aloud at the sight of him."

"Nay," said the son, "it was at me, their brother, that they cried. See, I have cut myself by mischance, and it was for that that they were grieved."

The guards were deceived, and went on their way, dragging the wise master's body through Rome in

disgrace. Thus the son saved himself, but let his father be slain and his body dishonoured.

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"Even so, sire, will you fare," said the Empress. "Your son will slay you, and when you are dead he will dishonour you: as this son in the story did, so will your son also do, if you put faith in that tale of Hippocras and his cousin."

"You speak truly, dame," answered the Emperor. "My son shall die to-morrow."

On the morrow the same thing happened as before; the prince was sentenced to die at once; but this time the third Wise Master Lentulus interfered to save him.

"Sir Emperor," he cried, "in all deeds be wary and wise. If you slay your son, such evil will come upon you as befell the rich old man who was turned out of doors by his wife."

"How could a wife turn her husband out of doors?" asked the Emperor. "Tell me that, Wise Master."

"Gladly will I tell you, sire, if you will send your son again to prison for a day and night, and not slay him. But if he is killed, I cannot tell you this story."

The Emperor once more consented, and Lentulus began his tale.

The Husband Shut Out

There was once a rich burgess of this city who had a wife whom he loved as his own life. But though he loved her, she cared little for him. She was young and fair and gay, and liked rather to go to feasts and merry-makings, and to talk and jest with younger men instead of with her old husband.

Now there was a law in Rome at that time that if any man or woman, whether nobly born or lowly, were found in the streets after the sound of the curfew bell, he or she should be seized by the watch, kept in durance till the morrow, and then driven publicly through the town as a vagrant and a rogue. The burgess remembered this law, and resolved to teach his wife a lesson by means of it. He pretended one night that he was ill, and went early to bed, knowing full well that she would take this chance to leave him and join her riotous friends.

It fell out as he expected. No sooner was he in bed than he heard his wife hasten out of the house. At once the burgess ran to the door after her, and closed it securely; then he went up to the window and called to her as she hurried away.

"Farewell, my lady," he said. "You have forsaken me. Go stay with your friends; I will have no more of you."

"Oh sir," she answered, abashed and afraid, "have mercy. Let me in; right soon the curfew bell will be sounded."

"Nay, I give you up. You do not enter here again."

She wrung her hands, and made great lamentation. "Alas! what care I for life now?" she cried. "I have lost my husband's love, and he has turned me out of doors, and I must be disgraced ere long, when the watch find me after curfew."

But she had in her mind a crafty plot to get back into her house, and be revenged on her husband. She moaned and wept, and at last, with a despairing cry, "Husband," she called to him, "here is the well hard by. I will go drown myself, since you no longer want me for your wife."

"Drown yourself, then," answered the burgess, carelessly, for he did not believe her threat. "You have lived too long in idleness and gaiety."

She said no more, but in the darkness took up a great stone and cast it into the well. It fell with a loud splash; and she went straightway and crouched close to the house door.

"What is that sound?" thought her husband, when he heard the splash. "Can my wife have done as she said? Alas if it be so, for though she be heedless and heartless, I would not have her die."

He went out straight to the well, and looked for her, and called her by name, but found her not; for as he rushed headlong from the house, leaving the door open, she slipped in and bolted the door fast from inside.

Presently the burgess gave up looking for her, and came back to the door. "What is this?" he cried, when he found it barred.

"Ah, husband," answered his wife from the window above, "is it not time you came into the house? Curfew will be rung ere long."

"I thought you drowned," he said. "Now let me in, dame, for it is nigh the time of curfew, as you say."

"Nay," she said, "abide there and let the watch find you. You are an old rogue to be out after curfew. You shall taste the dish you would have set before me."

As she spoke, curfew sounded, and anon the watch came riding by.

"See," she cried to them, "here is an old reveller out of doors after curfew. Take him and give him his due."

What more need I say? That night the woman lay warm in bed, while her husband was in hardship and sorry plight in jail; and in the morning he was led through the town in disgrace, according to the law.

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"Was she not full of guile, this woman?" asked the Wise Master Lentulus, at the end of his tale. "Would you put your faith in such an one, sire?"

"Faith, she was a traitor," answered Diocletian. "I would have nought to do with her."

"There are others like her, sire," said Lentulus. "You have one for your wife. She will surely betray you, even as the woman in my story betrayed her husband, if she but finds the chance."

"It may be that your words are wise," said the Emperor. "Whatever be the truth, I will not let her beguile me. My son shall not die for all her pleading."

But that night the Empress once more persuaded him with a tale, and on the morrow he bade the guards bring Florentin forth to die. But as the prince was led from his prison, he met the Wise Master Maladas, who went straightway to the Emperor and begged him to spare his son.

"It will be a strange thing if you put him to death for the sake of an idle tale of your wife's," he said. "You will deserve such things as were wont to come upon the old man with the young wife, until he cured her of her evil ways."

"I have never heard that tale," said the Emperor. "Tell it to me."

"If you will spare the prince for another day, sire, I will tell it," answered Maladas; and the Emperor gave his promise for that day.

The Man who Tamed his Wife

There was once an old burgess who gathered to himself great store of this world's goods. He was twice wedded, but when his second wife died he took no other for many years. At length, when he was old and grey, he married a young girl whose only thought was of the riches and happiness and constant pleasure she would have in being married.

They lived together in content for a little while, but before long the wife grew weary of her old husband. He could not share her pleasures, nor love the gay things and mirth which were dear to her. He showed

neither love nor dislike of her, and his coldness angered her. Meeting her mother one day by chance, she told her of her loneliness.

"My husband is old and cares little for me," she said. "I wish I were rid of him."

"Nay, daughter, bear with him," said her mother wisely. "Old men are crafty: perchance he puts on an air of coldness in order to test your love. See, do you make trial of him in turn, in this manner. He has a fair garden, has he not? and an orchard which he loves, and in it is a young tree of which he is specially fond; he likes well to sit in its shade. I have seen you there with him. When he is away from home, summon the gardener, and bid him hew down this tree and cut it into logs for the fire. If your husband asks any reason for this deed, tell him it was done that his old bones might be warmed. Then if he believes you and is not wroth, but is more gentle to you than before, he must surely love you; but if he grows angry, he loves you not. So will you test his love for you."

"I will do it, lady mother," she answered; and straightway went home and found the gardener, and commanded him to cut down the tree on a day when his master should be absent.

When the burgess came home, he went into his garden to enjoy the sun and shade. But alas! his favourite tree was hewn down to the very ground; and when he asked the reason, his wife told him that the tree made good logs for the fire to warm him; therefore had she bidden it be hewn down.

"Oho!" thought the old man, in his heart, "this is a trick of yours, I see."

But he said nothing in complaint or anger, and his wife found that thereafter he showed her no more love than before. Before long she went again to her mother, and asked once more what she should do.

"Do nothing rash, my daughter; it must be that he is testing your love, as I have said. I will give you a plan. Your husband has a little greyhound which he loves to fondle, and often it sits in your lap, as I have seen; when it does this again, make as though you were suddenly angered, and stab the dog with your knife. See if that will not cause your lord to show some spirit, and thereafter to be more loving."

The wife did as her mother advised. As she and her husband, with their squire, sat by the fireside, she suddenly uttered a cry of anger, and stabbed the poor little greyhound to the heart.

"Be not wroth, my lord," she said. "The dog bit me."

"You need not have slain my dog," answered her husband. Yet he showed no great wrath outwardly. "You could have beaten it, or set it down from your lap without harm."

With that he went from the room, and said no more. But his love for her seemed no warmer than before.

Once more the wife sought counsel of her mother.

"Try him a third time, my daughter," said her mother. "In a few days' time he gives a great feast to his rich friends. That day you will be busied with preparing the feast, and you will sit at the table when

all is ready. Hang at your girdle a great bunch of keys, and, as you sit at the feast, make fast one of the keys to the table-cloth; then, upon some pretext, rise suddenly and leave the table. The key will drag the cloth after you, and the cups and the plates and the wines will be scattered, and all the feast spoiled. Will that provoke him, think you? Will that make him show either love or anger?"

"Yes, faith," answered she; and she put the plan into practice even as her mother had advised. As she rose from the feast, cloth, cups, wines, and meats were dragged helter-skelter by her bunch of keys.

The old burgess said never a word at this last offence, but only made amends to his guests as best he could. But on the morrow he sent hot-foot for a neighbour, a skilful barber and surgeon; and when this man was come, a great fire was made in the wife's chamber, and many basins and cloths set out.

"What is this, my lord?" she asked in surprise, when she saw these preparations.

"This is for you, wife," he answered. "Your blood is too hot, and your spirits too high. You have cut down my tree and stabbed my greyhound and spoiled my feast; and you must needs be in ill health to do such things. The surgeon here will bleed you; and then we will eat and drink well, and be merry, and afterwards again you shall be bled: and you shall be bled thrice, for thrice in your madness you have done me wrong; you shall be cured of your sickness very speedily."

It was done as he said, though when they came to eating and drinking, the poor wife, for terror and

"You shall be cured of your sickness very speedily."

shame, had no appetite. When the surgeon had done with her, she sent straightway for her mother, believing herself, in her weakness, on the point of death.

"My lord has nigh slain me," she said, "for following your counsel these three times."

"Daughter, are you contented with him now?" asked her mother.

"Yes, truly," she answered; "I shall not complain again that he is cold and heartless and without spirit. Truly he knows best, and his heart is alive, whatever be the outward show."

"I said that old men were crafty, my daughter. Your lord has taken his own way to show you that what he does is best. Obey him, and love him, and do his will, and you shall have all that you desire."

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"Even so, sire," said Maladas, "should you control your wife. As this old man was driven by her discontent to put a check upon her, so should you too refuse to do your wife's will, unless you would have her rule you in all things. Spare your son, and you will win the mastery over your wife; but if you spare him not, she will be for ever seeking some new and yet harder boon at your hands."

"You say well, Maladas," said Diocletian; "Florentin shall not die to-day."

But the Empress was not defeated. That night she told the Emperor yet another story to make him change his mind.

Crœsus, the Gold-lover

The great necromancer Vergil (said the Empress) wrought many wonders in this city of Rome. He made a fire in the midst of the city which no man could quench; all the poor men of the land warmed themselves thereat, and cooked their meat by its heat. Close by the fire Vergil set a tall brazen statue of a man with a bow in his hand, stretched to the full, with an arrow on the string, ready for shooting. On the forehead of the figure was carved, "Who strikes me shall himself be struck in turn."

One day there came a noble of the Lombards, a vain, boastful man, and saw this marvel of the fire and the statue. He asked the men of Rome if he might smite the statue; and when they idly said that he might, he struck it. Straightway the statue let the arrow fly from the string; it flew into the fire, and put out for ever the flame that no man yet had been able to quench.

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"Was that a good deed, sire?" asked the Empress, breaking off her tale.

"No, dame, in truth, it was a foolish deed," he said.

"Hear then what other marvels Vergil wrought, and how foolish men in after days made his magic arts of no avail; and learn from these things a lesson for yourself."

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In the midst of the city of Rome (continued the

Empress) this Vergil made yet another image of a man, greater than human size, holding a mirror in his hand. In this mirror was reflected all that befell in Italy within seven days' journey of Rome. At the east gate also he set a third statue, that held in its hand a golden ball, and over against it on the western gate yet another like it; and the Romans affirmed that these two statues on the gates played ball together, and threw the golden ball one to the other.

Now the King of Apulia at that time bore great enmity to the King of Rome, and would fain have done him an injury. He made many a plan to take the city by surprise, but could not, for the enchanted mirror reflected all his doings. If ever he set his men in array, the mirror told the people of Rome, and they were full ready long before he could reach them.

At length the King of Apulia, growing weary of failure, sought counsel of the wise men in his realm, and told them all his grievance. "And I will highly advance him who can cause this magic statue to be overturned for me," he said.

There were two wise masters in Rome at this time, and they heard of the King's promise. Within a little time (for they were traitorous and cunning men) they came to Apulia and vowed to do as the King desired, saying to him that they would ask their reward when they had caused the magic statue to be broken down.

"This much we ask, Sir King," they said. "You must fill us two great chests of gold and precious stones, and give them into our charge."

The King of Apulia did as they asked, and they returned to Rome with their chests of treasure. On a feast day, when none were by, they took the chests and dug pits, and laid one chest under the eastern statue, and one under the western. Then they covered the pits so that no man could tell that the earth had been moved, and left secret marks in the places by which to know them again, and went to the King of Rome.

"Sire," they said, "we have knowledge of great treasure buried in this city, hidden under the earth. If you will, we will discover it to you. But if we do this we must have half of it for ourselves."

"So be it," said Crœsus; "go about finding the treasure."

"Nay," said the elder of the two, "we must wait till the morrow, sire. To-night the exact place of the treasure will be revealed to us in a dream; to-morrow it shall be found."

The King agreed; and on the morrow the wise masters went to the eastern statue, and dug under it, and pretended to find afresh the treasure which they had hidden there.

At the sight of so much treasure Crœsus was aflame with desire of more; and when the wise masters offered to search under the west gate also, he readily agreed. There they found the second chest, and the King was so pleased thereat that he would have granted them anything in the world.

"There is no one alive so wise as you," he said.

"This is a good treasure that we have found," said the elder wise master. "But we know a better yet.

We can show you all the marvellous riches and jewels of Vergil the necromancer. Let us but dream once again to-night, and the spot where this great treasure lies shall surely be made known to us."

They went to bed, and the next morning, when they arose, hastened to the King.

"Sire, we know where all Vergil's riches lie hid," they said. "We learnt in our dreams last night that under the image that holds the mirror we shall find such wealth as is not in all Rome and all Apulia, You shall have a marvel of gold if we can but dig under that image."

"Nay, for all the wealth in the world I may not bring harm to that statue," answered Crœsus.

"Sire, it is all Vergil's treasure that lies thereunder, wealth such as no man knows! And we shall so prop the image from underneath, if we may but dig, that no harm can come to it. When we have taken the gold from the ground, we shall fill the earth in again, and make the statue as though it had never been touched, for we are cunning masters as well as wise masters."

"Do as you say, then," said Crœsus, "but do not harm the statue."

"The treasure shall be yours, sire," they answered; "we will dig and yet save the image, and to-morrow you shall be the richest man in all the world."

So they went to the statue and dug under it, with the King's leave. Right under the foundations of it was a great pit hollowed out, till the statue stood all insecure, propped up from underneath only by wooden

beams. Still the two wise masters laboured on, till all Rome was gone to bed; and at last, in the dead of night, they built a great fire in the pit they had dug, and fanned it till the wooden props were kindled and burnt, so that they gave way and fell, and the statue toppled and was broken. Then the two wise masters, having done their work, left the pit, and fled to Apulia, where the King rewarded them as they deserved.

On the morrow the King of Rome arose, and learnt what had befallen. His heart sank within him when he knew that the magic statue was overturned, and he would fain have fled; but all the people of Rome, seeing the evil that had been done, came to his palace, and he could not escape. They took King Crœsus, and bound him to a table, and prepared molten gold in a crucible.

"See, King, here is gold," they cried; "you have betrayed us for gold. Gold you shall have, till never more shall you covet it."

With that they poured the molten gold into his mouth and his eyes and his ears, till he died. And so Crœsus was deceived by the wise masters, and came to his end with great shame.

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"You say true, dame," said the Emperor; "King Crœsus came to a shameful end."

"Yes, sire, and why?" answered the Empress. "He died because he trusted these wise masters who played him false. Even so, if you heed the counsel of these Seven Wise Masters, will you also come to a shameful end."

"By heaven," said Diocletian, "I will not wait for that. For all they say, my son Florentin shall die to-morrow morn."

The next morning Diocletian sent for his tormentors and bade them put Florentin to death. But ere the sentence could be carried out the fifth Wise Master Cato came riding to the Emperor's palace, and strode into the presence, and greeted his lord on bended knee.

"Mercy, sire," he cried, "for holy charity's sake. Hear me speak, lord Emperor. I tell you here to your face that if you do not spare your son, you will fall in like case to the burgess and his magpie."

"Ha! The burgess and his magpie," quoth the Emperor. "What is that tale? Tell it me, I pray you."

"Send and bid them keep your son alive this whole day, sire," said Cato, "and you shall hear this tale."

It was done as the Wise Master besought, and he began his tale.

The Magpie

There was a burgess lived in the city of Rome, a man of great renown, a merchant of rich possessions. He had a young wife, very fair to look upon, but fickle in heart, so that she loved playing and sporting with young men when she should have been busied with ordering her house and keeping it for her husband.

This burgess had a magpie in his hall, dwelling in

a rich cage. It was a bird of much cunning and wisdom, and could speak with a human voice like any man. Every day it was wont to tell its master all that befell: who had come in, who had gone out, what follies his wife had done, who of the gay young nobles had been to visit her; and all that passed in the burgess's hall from one day to another. The burgess's wife knew of this, for many a time had her husband, learning from the magpie of her misdoings, rebuked her; and he put such faith in the magpie that he would trust it rather than any man, and would never believe that it could lie to him. Little wonder, then, that the wife made up her mind to be avenged on the bird, and stop its tale-bearing.

It befell on a certain day that the burgess went away from home on his affairs, and left his wife alone. "Now," thought she, "I will play a trick upon this crafty bird."

She sent for one of her gay friends. When he came to the hall-door, he stopped and would not come inside, for he was sore afraid. He could hear the voice of the magpie chattering within. "Yea, my lord is gone abroad," it said. "You come here for no good, in his absence: I will betray you to him."

But the wife had a cunning plan. She called her maid, and together they set up a ladder, reaching to the rafters above the top of the magpie's cage. They loosened a tile or two in the roof with a great noise, as if it had been struck violently. Over the magpie's head they set a brazen basin, brightly

polished, and a lighted candle, the flame whereof danced and flickered with a thousand reflections in the shining brass of the basin. Then they beat upon the basin loudly, and waved the candle to and fro, and emptied a pot of water down upon the magpie's head.

That was the woman's plan; and when she had done thus, she bade the man come in, and they played idly as long as they pleased.

The good burgess came home in due time, and asked his bird what news there was for him. A fine tale the magpie had to tell. "Master, many things came to pass when you were absent. Such and such a man visited your wife, and sported with her, even as I have told you many times before. And before he came there was such a thunderstorm as I never heard or saw. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the rain poured down; yes, and the very tiles of your roof were struck by the storm."

The burgess's wife heard all this tale. "I have caught you, base magpie," she thought in her heart. "My lord," she said aloud to her husband, "this bird is lying to you. There was no storm; the weather has been fair, and no cloud has been seen in the sky, and yet this magpie says it has thundered. Ask any man you will of these parts; he will tell you whether there was a storm or not. The bird has lied to you, I say, as it has done many a time before. You would always believe the magpie; see now whether it can tell a lie or not."

The good man asked his neighbours of the weather, whether it had thundered or had been fair. They

answered that there had been no rain nor thunder nor lightning for many days past.

Back into his hall came the burgess, and looked at his magpie very sorrowfully. "The bird has lied to me," he said to himself; "never more shall it deceive me."

And straightway, with no word more spoken, he wrung the magpie's neck.

But when he saw the bird dead, he was wild with sorrow. He remembered his love for it, and how truly and well it had served him. "What if this should be some trick?" he thought.

He went out of his hall and looked about. He spied the ladder lying a little out of place, as though it had been lately moved; and he brought it into the hall, and set it up by the magpie's cage. Up to the roof he mounted. There he saw the brazen basin still fastened, and the candlestick and the tiles loosened, and the water-pot on a beam where his wife had left it. All the plot was made clear.

He climbed down from the ladder, grim and wrathful at heart. He took a stout staff, and found his wife, and beat her full sore; and when he had beaten her, he turned her out of doors. "Go," he said; "I have had enough of your guile and your evil ways."

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"Lo, sire," said Cato, "mark well this story. The good magpie, just for the word of a treacherous woman, was slain by its master who had loved it dearly. Had he taken good counsel, the magpie would have been whole and well. Even so are you and your

son. The lady Empress, like the burgess's wife, goes about day and night seeking to slay the prince; and you would put your son to death for a word of hers."

"It is a good tale, Master Cato," said the Emperor, "and you say well. I will not be hasty in my judgments. My son shall not die to-day."

So Florentin was spared yet a fifth day. But he was not yet out of danger.

The night came, the day was gone, and the Emperor went to his chamber. Thither speedily came also the Empress, with a mien as of one in great grief and anger.

"Lady Empress, you make sorry cheer," said the Emperor. "Tell me why you look sad and sorrowful."

"It is no wonder that I weep, sire. For your sake I lament, and for what you have done this day. Your Seven Wise Masters will surely undo you. See how they have caused you to spare Prince Florentin: they would have you love your foes. If you do any longer as they bid you, there will come upon you the fate of King Herod, who lost his sight in wondrous wise."

"I must hear that tale, dame," quoth Diocletian.

"Blithely will I tell it you, fair lord, if so be that you may fare the better for it."

Herod and the Bubbles

There was an Emperor of Rome, Herod by name, the richest man in all Christendom. He had at his

court seven wise masters to give him counsel; all that the Emperor did was done by their advice. They were nigh as rich as Herod himself, for all men who sought office or power or reward gave them presents, in order that through them the Emperor's favour might be won.

It befell upon a day that the Emperor rode out to hunt. But as he passed the gate of Rome, a sudden blindness came upon him. He could see nothing, nor could any man there avail to give him back his sight; he was as blind as a stone. The seven wise masters read their books and put forth all their magic arts, but could do nought to cure the Emperor.

At length a man bethought him of the sage, Merlin, the wise man that never had a father. Merlin, he said, could cure the Emperor if it was in the power of man. So Merlin was sent for and brought before the Emperor, who told him the evil that had befallen him.

"Sir," quoth Merlin boldly, "come to your bedchamber, and I will solve this evil."

They went to the King's bedchamber, and Merlin told them his thoughts. "Under your bed, Sir Emperor, far down, there is a great cauldron of water, boiling day and night, with seven bubbles in it. So long as the bubbles boil, your sight will never come back."

The Emperor marveiled at this strange saying. But Merlin bade him remove the bed and the floor to see if his words were not true.

It was done as he said. They dug deep into the

'Under your bed is a great cauldron of water, boiling day and night.'"

ground beneath the floor of the bedroom, and there, hidden in the earth, lay a wondrous cauldron, in which water was for ever boiling; and on the water were always seven great bubbles floating. All men wondered thereat; and it was told to the Emperor.

"Merlin, what marvel is this that I am told?" asked Herod.

"Sire, I will tell you what it is," he answered. "These seven bubbles signify seven evil spirits who do always abide near you; they are your seven wise masters. They take your wealth, Sir Emperor, and turn aside your justice by receiving bribes. They have done away with the old customs of this land, and brought in new and evil ways. You are blind to them, and see them not, even as you saw not these great bubbles till I revealed them. Heaven struck you with blindness in your eyes because of the blindness of your heart."

"Tell me, then, magician, what shall I do to be rid of this double enchantment, the seven sages and the seven bubbles?"

"Thus and thus, sire," said Merlin; and he bade him first take and behead the chief of the wise masters. "Even as his head is struck off," he said, "the greatest bubble in the cauldron will vanish. And thereafter you must behead every one of these evil masters, if you would be rid of your blindness."

There and then Herod sent for the chief of the wise masters, and slew him by the side of the cauldron. Even as the man's head was struck off, all the

court looked at the cauldron; and lo, the greatest bubble was there no longer.

"By St. Martin, you speak true," said the Emperor, when he heard of it. "Henceforth I will do all that you counsel."

"You will never regain your sight, sire," answered Merlin, "until you have slain all these seven evil men."

"They shall die, every one," said the Emperor; and forthwith they were all put to death. As they died, the great bubbles vanished in turn; and when they were all gone the Emperor received his sight again. He rode out at the city gate to see if the sight were truly restored, or if it would once more be taken from him at the gate. But he came safely through the gate into the green fields outside, and his sight was not taken away; and there he fell on his knees and thanked God for the wonder that had been wrought by the wisdom of Merlin.

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"See, sire, what wickedness seven wise masters can accomplish," said the Empress, as she finished her tale. "Thus will your Seven Masters do to you, or worse."

"Thus they shall not, dame," answered the Emperor in wrath. "At dawn they and my son shall die."

The cock crew, and it was day. The Emperor went to his judgment hall and seated himself on his throne. "Bring forth my son, Florentin, and put him to death," he cried.

Florentin was led from his prison into the hall to

hear this stern decree. At the sight of him many wept, for he was young and fair, and unworthy of death. But the King had no mercy. He bade the executioners smite off the prince's head forthwith.

"Hold!" cried the sixth Wise Master, Jesse, starting up. "You will rue this, sire. It does you little honour to slay such a man as your son would be, for the bare word of a woman. If you let him lose his life, may that betide you which came upon the knight who died for grief at the cutting of his wife's finger with a knife."

"You shall tell me that tale," said Diocletian.

"Never a word shall you hear from me, sire, until your son be spared for this day."

"Be it so," answered the Emperor. "Take Florentin back to prison," he said to the guards, "and you, Jesse, begin your tale."

The Widow who would be Comforted

There was a rich knight in this country who married a fair young wife whom he loved very truly; and she also loved him dearly, but not so dearly as it seemed.

It befell one day that they were looking at a new knife, curiously wrought, with a sharp edge. Suddenly, by an evil chance, the knife slipped, and cut the lady's finger. It was but a little cut; but the knight sorrowed so deeply to see his dear wife wounded that out of grief he fell sick, and within a little time died.

He was buried with great splendour, and the widow could by no means be comforted for his death.

"I will not leave his grave," said she. "I can live no longer, now that he is taken from me. I will dwell here where he lies."

"Dear lady," said her friends, "have regard for yourself; you are fair and young, and may yet be spared to the world for many years. Perchance you will wed some other knight, and have fair gentle children. Put away your grief, and take some comfort."

"No comfort will I have," said she, "but will die here on my dear lord's grave."

They saw that she would not cease from her sorrow; yet they feared greatly for her if she abode there, for it was a cold winter. At last they built her a little hut by her lord's grave, and brought to it food and warm clothing, and lit a great fire, that no harm might come to her; and there she remained, weeping and wailing without end.

It chanced that not far from the grave there were three gallows set up. Three knights that had forgotten their knighthood and done evil deeds had that very day been hanged thereon. A young knight of the country had been appointed to watch by the gallows for three nights, lest any man should try to steal the bodies of the three caitiffs. He came armed in iron and steel to keep the first night's watch. But it was cold by the gallows, and he looked about him for shelter.

Suddenly he was aware of a fire in the churchyard.

He began to walk towards it, to get warm; and soon he saw the lady making moan in her hut.

"Lady, may I also enter into your hut and be warmed?" he asked.

The lady would not let him in at first. But seeing how cold he had grown, and how comely he was to look upon, she had pity on him, and bade him come inside; and he sat down and warmed himself by the fire.

"Lady, you make sorry cheer," said he anon, seeing the grief in her face. "Why should one so young and fair moan for the dead, who can do neither harm nor good? Comfort yourself, pluck up your heart; you do wrong to mourn. You should instead love some gentle knight who might bring you solace."

"Alas," she said, "this my husband who is dead was so fair and gentle that I can love no other man so truly."

But she cast her eye secretly upon the knight, and once more found him goodly and well-liking; whereat her sorrow began to abate.

Presently, as he grew warm, the knight bethought him again of his charge.

"I am set to watch the bodies of three caitiff knights hanged on yonder gallows," he said, "I trust no man has touched them while I have sat here in your company, fair lady. It were well if I went to see."

He walked to the gallows. There hung two bodies, but the third was gone. It had been stolen in his absence.

"Woe is me!" he cried. "I am undone, and my honour is lost! Some rogue has stolen one of those who were hanged here, and I should have watched against it, but have not. What shall I do? I am dishonoured for ever; I have betrayed my knighthood."

He stood gazing at the empty gallows. Suddenly he bethought him of the fair lady. "Women can oft help men in their need," he said to himself. "I will ask her aid."

He went back to her hut, and told her of his ill fortune, and begged her to help him. The lady looked on him, and was more than ever pleased with his appearance.

"I will help you, sir," said she, "if you will wed me."

"Wed you, dame?" cried he. "Gladly will I do that."

The widow's sorrow was all gone. "Help me, dear knight," she said; "we will dig up my lord who is dead. He shall help us; he shall be hanged in place of this caitiff whose body is stolen away."

They did as she said. They dug up her husband's body and bore it to the gallows, and hanged it in the empty place.

"I like it not, lady," said the knight. "If it were known that I had hanged a dead knight here, men would with truth call me coward."

"A fig for your fears," said she, and made the body fast to the gallows.

"Dame, I had forgot," said the knight suddenly.

"She cast her eye upon the knight, and found him goodly and well-liking."

"The caitiff that was hanged here had a great wound in his head, whereby all men could recognise him. They will know that this is not he."

"Take your sword, Sir Knight," answered she, "and smite this my lord in the head with it. None then shall know that it is not the right man that hangs here."

"Nay, dame, for no cause, great or little, would I smite a dead knight."

"No, sir? Give me your sword, then, and I will with my own hand smite his crown."

She took the sword and smote her lord's head in the midst, striking with might and main. All her old love was clean forgotten in her evil desire for this new lover.

The knight saw full well how false and fickle she was. Yet he tempted her once more.

"This is still unlike the caitiff who was hanged, lady; his fore teeth were broken," he said.

"Smite them out," said she.

"Nay, lady, that will I never do," he answered.

"Then will I," she said, and took a stone, and smote out two teeth. "Now, Sir Knight, I have won your love!"

"Nay, dame, by Heaven you have not!" answered he sternly. "Not for gold nor for silver, not for land nor for house would I wed you. One day you would serve me even as you have served this your lord. I will have none of you." And, the night being well nigh ended, he left her there.

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"So, sire," quoth Jesse the Wise Master, "was not it shameful that a man who died for love should be thus treated by his wife after his death? Even so will your wife treat you if you obey her in all things."

The Emperor was once more persuaded, and he made up his mind not to slay his son. But that night the Empress told him yet another story that moved him from his purpose.

Master Genever

Three heathen kings (said the Empress) once upon a time came to besiege this city of Rome. They sat down before it, and pressed the defence sorely, until, in despair, the Emperor gave over the rule to seven wise masters. Each man of them saved the city for a day, though hard put to it, until the turn of the last one, Genever, came; and to him fell the hardest task of all, for the heathen had by now well-nigh triumphed.

Genever made a cunning device to save Rome. He bade the people of Rome arm themselves fully, and be in readiness for battle at a certain time. For himself he caused to be made a strange dress; it was a black cloak, covered all over with black squirrel's tails, that fluttered and waved with every breeze; on his face he put a double mask, showing a different face on either side, and each the most horrible that

could be imagined; on the top of his head was fixed a mirror, which would reflect the sun's rays dazzlingly before him.

A little before the time appointed for the Romans to be in readiness, Master Genever mounted upon a high tower of the battlements of the city, fronting the sun, and looking down upon the heathen host. When he had come to the summit, he waved his arms, and leapt to and fro like a madman, screaming at the top of his voice.

"I am mighty, I am powerful, I am strong," he cried; "I have fought with hosts and put them to flight. None can stand against me."

At the strange sight the heathen were aghast. They knew not what the figure on the tower, with its waving arms, and its fluttering garment, and its flashing rays, might be. They thought that either it was some evil spirit of great might whom the Romans had called up to help them, or else that one of the Roman gods had come down in person to aid his people. Whichever it should be, the thing would be too strong for them. They turned and fled headlong.

As soon as Master Genever saw the heathen in flight, he made a sign to the Romans below. They threw open the gates, and sallied forth, and fell upon the enemy. In a little time they had slain many thousands, and put the rest utterly to rout. Then they returned in triumph to Rome, and, since Master Genever had by his cunning arts saved the city from the heathen, they deposed the old Em-

peror, and made Master Genever their ruler in his stead.

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"So, too, sire, will you lose your kingdom at the hands of these cunning Wise Masters," said the Empress; "and they will make your son lord and king in your stead, and rule through him."

"Florentin shall not be Emperor," vowed Diocletian. "He shall die to-morrow."

On the morrow Florentin was led forth to death once more. But the seventh Wise Master Marcius came before the Emperor and pleaded for him.

"Sire," he said, "you are lord of justice here. See that you be careful and wise. It is shame to you that you would work ill upon your son whom you should love. Be his friend but one day more, or you will fare as did the earl who trusted his wife's words more than his own eyes."

"That earl lacked wit, if he did not believe his eyes," said Diocletian.

"So, too, will you lack wit, sire, if you put faith in your wife's words. Let Florentin live. To-morrow he will recover his speech and tell you all; then shall you see which is wrong, your wife or he."

"That would I fain know, Sir Master," said Diocletian. "He shall live this day. Tell me now this story."

The Two Dreams

There was formerly a knight in Hungary (said Marcius) of great prowess and might, and very fair

to look upon, even as many other knights. But in one thing he surpassed all others; in wit and subtlety of mind there was none like him, and not even the most learned clerks of that day could equal him.

One night a strange dream came to this knight. He beheld himself, in the dream, being wedded to a bright lady of exceeding loveliness, and afterwards sailing away in a ship with her.

(The lady of whom he dreamed, it chanced, had exactly the same dream that night, and long treasured it in her heart, hoping that the knight who in the dream wedded her would one day come to her. But she lived in a far country, and neither as yet had so much as seen or heard of the other. Yet their dreams showed that in time they would meet.)

The knight put great faith in this vision; and when he woke he could not rid his thoughts of the fair lady, whose image was ever before his eyes. As soon as he was able, he took his arms and his horse, and set forth to seek her, though he knew not where in all the wide world he would find her.

For three weeks the knight journeyed over hill and dale. Oft he sighed sore for love of the lady of his dream, but never once did he hear tidings of any who might be she. At last he came to the coast of Apulia, to a great castle by the sea. On one side of the castle was a town and a harbour, full of ships; on the other it could be reached only through a gate in one strong tower.

In this strong tower lay the lady whom the knight had seen in his dream. She was the prisoner of the

earl of that country; and he was so jealous of her beauty that he would let no other man so much as speak to her. The tower was richly furnished within, but no man might enter it, nor could the lady leave it, for her chamber had but one door, whereof the earl alone had the key; and all the windows were stoutly barred. Often had the lady prayed for some knight who would take her from this prison, for though the earl used her courteously, she did not love him.

It chanced that as the knight of Hungary rode by the great gate of the castle, which was beneath her chamber in this tower, the lady was at the window. He looked up and saw her face, and great joy came upon him as he recognised the lady of his dream. He sang merrily of love as he rode; and the lady would fain have answered in song, but durst not, for on a little lawn below the window sat the earl her husband, playing chess with one of his vassals.

The knight, having found what he sought, rode swiftly on to the town which lay hard by, and took lodging at the inn.

"Who lives in yonder great castle?" he asked the host.

"The lord of this country, fair sir," said the host, and told him who the earl was, and how strong was his castle, and how jealousiy the lady therein was guarded. "But the earl hath been much harassed of late, for all his great power," said he. "His enemies have made war upon him these two years past, and have pressed him hard."

On the morrow the knight rode again to the castle, and sought speech with the earl.

"Sir Earl," he said, "I am a knight from a far country. In my own land I loved a lady bright; and another knight loved her also, and I slew him in fair combat. But he had powerful kinsmen, and they drove me from my country. Since then I have wandered seeking honourable adventures. I come to offer you my sword, for I hear that you have many foes."

"You are welcome here, fair knight," answered the earl. "Of men like you I have great need. Help me well, and I will reward you richly."

The knight entered into the earl's service, and fought in his wars. There was no knight that bare shield who could stand against him; and his subtlety in counsel caused the earl to outwit his enemies till they were well-nigh driven utterly from his borders. He gave the knight rich rewards, and made him steward of all his land, and would have had him stay with him for ever.

But the knight had come for other work than fighting. Every day he rode past the window of the tower, in the hope that he might have speech with the lady of his dream; and when the earl was absent, he would play and sing there, that she might know of his presence. But she gave him no sign until a certain day, when she cast down to him through the bars of her window a letter writ upon fine parchment.

The knight took up the parchment with glad heart, and read it. In it the lady told him of her dream,

and vowed that she could love him only, and besought him to deliver her from the earl.

The knight was much cheered by this letter; and now that he knew that the lady loved him, he set to work with might and main to win her from her prison. He besought the earl, when he returned home, to give him a little plot of waste land in a place joining the strong tower. He purposed, he said, to build himself a house and dwell there.

The earl suspected nothing, for the knight spoke him fair and courteously; and he was well pleased at the thought that so brave a warrior would build a house and abide by him always; and he gave the knight the land which he asked. "Do as you will," he said; "build a tower at your liking."

As soon as he had the land, the knight put a plan in train. He summoned to him many masons to build his little tower, and in particular one very skilled in the making of underground passages; he was lately come to that country, and no man was more cunning than he. Many dungeons and chambers were built, as if the knight expected to take a multitude of prisoners; and among them the skilful mason made a passage to run underneath the earl's strong tower.

"May I trust in you, to tell you my private plan?" said the knight to this mason.

"Truly, sir," he answered; "you may trust me even with your life."

"You shall build a passage into the chamber of the lady who is in this strong tower," said the knight.

"It shall be so," answered the mason; and he made the passage open into the lady's chamber so cunningly that none who knew not the secret of it could by any means discover it.

"It is well, mason," said the knight, when he saw what had been wrought. "And now I will quit you for this service. Come hither." And he took him apart, and slew him secretly, for he feared lest he might betray him.

When all the building was finished, the knight went by the underground passage to visit his lady; the earl knew nought of this. The lady received her lover with glad cheer, and together they plotted to escape thence.

When they had made an end of their converse, the lady gave the knight a ring. "Put this on," she said, "and let my lord the earl see it on your finger, and then bring it back to me secretly, without tarrying; thus and thus will we do, and soon shall I be free."

The knight put the ring on his finger, and went away. He came into the great hall of the castle, and sat down at the board to feast according to his custom; and the earl made merry cheer with him.

Suddenly the earl saw on the knight's finger the ring. It was one which he himself had given the lady, very costly, and curiously wrought; the like of it, the earl thought, was not to be found in the world, for he had caused it to be made specially by a cunning goldsmith.

Long he pondered when he saw that ring. There

could not be two so alike in the world, he thought; had the knight seen the lady? And how had he got the ring from her?

He rose from the board suddenly, and strode out of the room in silence. The knight saw that he had observed the ring, and went out also. He ran swiftly to his secret passage, and went to the lady's chamber and gave her the ring; then he went forth again without tarrying, just before the earl came in by his own door.

"Dear lady, I greet you," said the earl, and talked a while with her lightly. Then he spoke suddenly as if a thought had come to him. "Dame, show me the first gift I gave you, that curious ring; I would fain look upon the design of it."

"Sir, you shall see it, and many another jewel that you have given me," answered the lady.

"Let the others lie, dear lady," said the earl. "It is only this ring that I am fain to see."

"Do you think I have it not, that you ask for it so straitly, my lord?" asked the lady. "I do not wear it every day, but I have it safely."

"I pray you, grant me sight of it," said the earl.

Thereupon the lady drew out her purse, and opened it, and took therefrom the ring.

The earl looked at it. It was his own ring; he knew it well. He could make nought of what had happened. He gave back the ring, and with a few more words went away, assured that the knight cou'd not have taken the ring from the lady, but sorely puzzled none the less.

On the morrow he sent for the knight, and asked him to go a-hunting with him.

"Dear lord," answered the knight, "that may I not do; of your grace, I pray you hold me excused. I have received good and wondrous tidings, and must abide here. I learn that my peace has been made with the kinsmen of him whom I slew in my own land, and I may return thither in safety; and my dear lady, for whose sake I slew him, has herself come to me with these tidings, and would have me return with her speedily. I have served you well, lord earl; I pray you let me go with her. But first, if it be seemly, be pleased to dine with me this evening in my tower, and see my gracious lady ere we depart."

"Gladly will I do all I can for your comfort and well-being," said the earl. "You have been my true man, and I am loath to let you go. Nevertheless, I cannot in honour bid you stay. I will dine at your board when I return from my hunting, and will greet your lady bright."

The earl went a-hunting, and the knight repaired to his lady's chamber. He took to her a rich Hungarian robe, gaily dight, with gold and jewels in great plenty, and garlands of gold for her head, and a head-dress that hid her face and made her look far other than she was. These he bade her put on; and when all was prepared, he led her to his feast, and showed her to the earl as his bright lady, who had come to him from his own far country.

The earl was struck dumb at the sight. He saw before him one so like the lady in his strong tower

that it must be she; and yet she was strangely garbed, in gear that he had never given her. He sat glum and wild-looking at the feast; while they spoke to him gaily and made merry cheer, hardly a word did he answer, but ever and anon looked fixedly and long at the bright lady.

When the feast was ended, and the boards taken away, the lady suddenly made as if she swooned. The knight started from his seat, and lifted her tenderly in his arms, and bore her out. But as soon as they were outside, the lady recovered from her swoon, and hastened back to her chamber.

The knight came back to the earl. "My lady is better," he said; "it was but the heat of this chamber that made her swoon. I pray she will be recovered by to-morrow morn, when we depart from your land to sail to my own country."

The earl was deep in thought, for he still doubted whether it might not be his own lady who had sat at table with him. But he heard the knight's words.

"Sir knight," he said, "I give you God-speed and a fair voyage. But will you not wed your lady before you go? With a glad heart I would aid you, and be your neighbour in this matter; I will cause my chapel to be made ready, if you will wed her here."

The knight smiled in his heart. But openly he thanked the earl for his gracious words, and said that he would gladly wed the lady ere he went from that land.

The earl departed from the knight's tower, and went to the lady's chamber. By this time she had doffed her Hungarian robes, and was clad as of

wont; and when the earl came, he found her as she always was. His mind still was perplexed; but he could find nought to satisfy his doubts.

The knight had caused a fair ship to be made ready against his going; it was filled with good victuals, and gaily bedecked; and on it all his gold and silver was set. On the next day, he made mirth and glee; trumpets were blown, and minstrels played, as if for a great festival; and the knight led the lady, clad again in her Hungarian garments, to the earl's chapel. The earl himself stood as his man, and when they were wedded showed the lady to the people as the knight's bride.

The sails were set, the men made all ready. "God prosper you, lord earl," said the knight. "Fare you well, sir knight," said the earl, "and you, gracious lady."

And so the knight sailed away with his lady. But the earl went back to his castle, to the strong tower, to find that his prisoner was gone from her cage.

. . . . . .

"Sir Emperor, right thus and in this manner will your wife beguile you, if you wait not till to-morrow before condemning the Prince Florentin," said Marcius.

"I would rather than anything on earth hear my son speak again," said the Emperor, "that I may know whether he or my wife is guilty. I will wait till to-morrow, as you say."

"It is well, sire; wait with good courage," quoth Marcius. "To-morrow you shall have your will, and learn which of these two is guilty."

When the Empress heard those words, she knew that her cause was lost. That night she told no story to turn aside Diocletian's mercy, but lay awake thinking, and oft-times sighed and wept.

On the morrow, early, the Emperor went to church with all his knights and barons, in great splendour; and when the service was ended, he went back to the judgment hall and ordered Prince Florentin to be brought before him. By his side sat the Empress, and hard by stood the Seven Wise Masters.

They led Florentin in. He was dressed befittingly, but was pale and wan, for in prison he had fared ill. At his appearance the people raised a great cry of joy; but he heeded them not. He kept silence till they had made an end. Then he fell on his knee before Diocletian, and asked his pardon for his long silence.

"Father, I am guiltless," he said; "the wicked will of your wife has raised up all this strife. She found by sorcery that I should die if I spoke within seven days of my coming to Rome. I too saw the same in the moon and the stars, and when I knew that I could not speak against her charges, I thought my heart would have broken asunder, for if I were put to death, these, my Seven dear Masters, would perchance have been slain also for their ill teaching of me. I would have them suffer nothing for my sake. I held my peace, and suffered all that men did to me till now. I have no more guilt than the son who was cast into the sea by his father."

"Dear son, you say well," answered the Emperor.

"But what is this tale that you speak of, concerning a son and his father? There is time for us to hear it; tell it now."

"Gladly, sire, at your will," said Florentin.

The Ravens

At a certain seaport far to the west of this city, began Florentin, there once dwelt a merchant courteous and free; his virtue was high, and all men loved him. It had pleased Heaven to give him a wondrous power; he could understand the tongue of every bird that flew. He prospered also exceedingly in his traffics, so that he need no longer spend all his hours in making more gains, but could take what pleasure he wished; and it was his wont for his pleasure to sail in a boat upon the sea.

This merchant had one son, comely and fair to look upon, and of much wisdom. He had been bred in every kind of learning, and he also was skilled to understand the tongue of birds.

It befell on a certain day that the father and the son together went sailing on the sea. After a time they landed on a little island; and when they went thence, two ravens followed them, fluttering about their boat, and sometimes sitting upon the mast, and making a great chattering.

"See this merchant," the son heard one raven say to the other. "Is he not prosperous and well-liking? Yet I tell you surely that one day his son will be

richer and more powerful than he; and the merchant will be glad to bring water for his son, and hold his sleeve while he washes his hands; and his mother shall hold the towel for him to wipe his hands."

The merchant had not listened to the ravens. But the son understood, and suddenly broke into laughter, and looked at his father.

"Why do you laugh, my son?" asked the merchant.

"I laughed at the strange things these ravens say," answered the son. "Did you not hear them?"

"Nay, I heeded them not," said the merchant. "What did they say?"

The son told him.

"Is it indeed so? Said they that?" the merchant cried, in great wrath. "And are you so discontented and jealous that you must needs believe them, and laugh at such a saying? I will soon show you that the ravens spoke falsely." And with that he caught his son suddenly by the waist, and cast him into the sea, meaning to drown him; then he changed the course of his boat, and set sail swiftly for port.

The son could swim well, but he gave up hope when he found himself in the sea, far, as he thought, from any land. He struck out despairingly, and as he swam he prayed. The wind blew hard, the waves ran high; but at length, sore, wearied, and buffeted, he was borne to the shores of a lonely island.

On this island he abode four days. Meat he had none; a few shellfish and some roots were all his food. But the birds of the island spoke to him continually, bidding him be of good cheer, for he would soon find himself in better case. They told truth;

"He caught his son suddenly by the waist, and cast him into the sea."

on the fifth day a fisherman came in sight in his boat, and at the youth's cry rowed to the shore.

"Help me, good sir," cried the castaway; "I am alone here."

"Truly, that will I," said the fisherman; and he took him on board his boat, and rowed him to the mainland. But he was very poor, and knew not how he should take another into his home; and when he had come to land, he sold the youth to a certain knight, the warden of a strong castle. Into this knight's service the youth entered, and quitted himself well, so that in a little time he was beloved of all men.

Now the King of that country was tormented in a strange way. Three ravens followed him whithersoever he went, and made a great screaming and crying about him night and day. In church, in his justice-hall, at the feast, whensoever he rode abroad or when he stayed at home, these ravens were with him, croaking and chattering always, so that he had no peace. No man could hit them with bow or sling; they could not be driven away. The King offered great rewards to the man who should rid him of this plague, but none could do it, not even when the hand of the King's daughter, with half the kingdom, was offered as the reward.

At last in despair the King called a great council of all his nobles and wise men; and to it went the lord of the castle, taking with him the merchant's son as his page. "You shall come with me," he said; "you will hear the King speak, and many great

and reverend men; take care that you profit by their words."

The King sat in council, and set forth his distress before them all. Even as he spoke, the ravens cawed round his head. But no man there could find any remedy. The great lords sat stone still; none dared answer.

"My lord," said the merchant's son to his master, in a whisper, "I can rid the King of this evil. Let me be sure that the King will not withhold the reward he has offered, and I will speak out."

"Be silent, boy," said his master. "Let such idle words be. If you were to speak, and give a wrong answer, it would be the undoing of us both."

"Sir, fear not. I know what all birds say in wood or cage, and I understand the speech of these ravens."

His master stood up. "Sir King," he cried, "I have here a lad who can tell you a remedy for your evil case, if you will hold to your promise of a reward."

"Let him speak," said the King. "I have promised the reward, and I will keep my word."

"Sire," said the youth, "as all men see, yonder by you sit three ravens. I know their speech. They are two males and one female. This female was formerly the mate of the older male; for thirty years they were mated. But in a year of great scarcity of corn, for gluttony's sake the elder raven broke his faith, and left her, and fed himself only. But the younger one, seeing her distress, succoured her, and fed her

well, and is now her mate. But the cold and the famine have passed away, and the old raven has come back, and claims her for his mate again. Hence they quarrel ceaselessly. Yet they have agreed this much, that you, sire, shall judge between them, for they know how true is your justice. When you have judged, they will depart, and trouble you no more."

The King was amazed at this saying. But he stood up to speak, and when he had pondered a little, he turned towards the ravens, and gave judgment; he decreed that since the elder raven had deserted his mate in time of trouble, she belonged now to the younger one who had succoured her.

The old raven gave a loud and rueful cry, and shook his wings, and flew away in a rage. But the other two cawed their thanks to the King's Majesty, and in a little while flew off, making merry cheer.

Then was the King cured of his trouble. Right there before his lords and barons he thanked the merchant's son; and he led forth the princess his daughter, and betrothed her to him, giving for dowry the half of his kingdom. In a little time the merchant's son and the princess were married, and lived in great happiness and honour.

But before long the merchant's son remembered his father, who, though at the last he had used him ill, had bred him kindly and generously; and, having made inquiries, he learnt that they had fallen on great poverty. For very shame they had left their country, and had come to the same town where now their son was in wealth and power.

When their son heard these tidings, he sent two sergeants to his parents, bidding them prepare to receive on a certain day the great lord who had married the King's daughter. They made ready so far as their poor means would let them, and on the appointed day welcomed their son humbly.

"Sir," said the old merchant, not recognising him, "we are too poor to do you such honour as is seemly. Nevertheless you are welcome here."

"All that we have is yours, sir, if you wish it," said the mother.

"Will you be pleased to wash your hands, sir?" said the merchant. "I will hold your sleeve, lest it be wetted. Wife, bring you the towel."

"Do you remember, sir, how certain ravens prophesied to you?" asked the son gently. "They said that you would hold my sleeve, and my mother bring the towel for me. I am your son."

The old merchant remembered the prophecy, and with great joy recognised his son. But in his gladness he trembled, and was afraid, for he remembered also how he had thrown his son into the sea. But the son readily forgave him. He gave orders that thereafter his parents should be lodged in his own palace; and there they abode in good cheer and mirth till death came upon them. Their son lived long and happily with his wife the princess, and when the King died, reigned in his stead for many years, doing justice and serving God.

Florentin brought his tale to an end, and did a

reverence to his father the Emperor. "You would have slain me, father, even as this merchant in my tale would have slain his son. Dear father, why would you do me ill? I have trespassed no more than this son against his father. And if when I am Emperor I came to great honour, would that grieve you? I would sooner die than do you harm."

The King turned to his wife. "Dame," he said, "does my son speak truth, or do you?"

The Empress knew that her treachery was of no avail. "He speaks truth, sire," she said. "He has done harm to no one. I was jealous of him, and therefore I would have slain him. Do with me as you will."

"You are not worthy to live," said Diocletian, in great wrath. "Make a great fire," he ordered; "cast this woman into it."

A great fire was built. They took the Empress, and tied her feet to her neck, and cast her into the midst of the fire; and so her evil-doing came to its end.

Prince Florentin lived in great honour, and was Emperor after his father. All his life he did wise and good works, and served God truly.

Sir Degoré and the Broken Sword

IN Britain there was once a King of great might and power, strong in arms and much renowned in the field. There was no man who could smite him out of his saddle in the lists, or make him flinch so much as to lose his stirrup.

This King had no son for his heir, but only a daughter, fair and gentle and of great beauty. Her fame went into all lands, so that many suitors sought her for wife. But the King loved her as his own life, and would give her hand to no man unless first he overcame him in a tournament; and so stout a warrior was the King that none yet had accomplished this.

The King's wife was long since dead. But the King had loved her dearly, and every year he set apart a certain day in her honour. On that day, with all his court, he would ride to an abbey, built to her memory in a forest; and there with prayers to Heaven and deeds of charity to the poor he lamented her the whole day.

It chanced that one year on this day of mourning the princess also rode out with the King. With her

were her chamberlain and two handmaidens. As they rode along, the Princess's shoe became unfastened, and she alighted from her horse to tie it again. Her attendants stayed with her, and in a little time, as the rest of the company hastened on towards the Abbey, followed them through the forest. But by evil hap they took a wrong road, and lost the way. The path became broken, the forest grew in thickness, and before long they were in despair. They wandered up and down, but found no way out; and at last, wearied, they halted and lay down under a great chestnut tree, and all fell asleep save the Princess.

The Princess, while her attendants rested, wandered to and fro and gathered flowers, and listened to the song of the birds. Soon she strayed from her companions, and was lost once more. She knew not which way to turn, for the forest was dark and thick, and there was no path to be seen in it.

"Alas that I was born!" she cried. "I am alone and forlorn in this wild forest. Savage beasts will find me and devour me."

Even as she spoke she saw coming towards her a knight, gentle, young, and seemly to look upon. He wore a coat of scarlet, and was as richly clad as any man in the King her father's realm.

"Welcome, damsel," said he, when he was come nigh, "be not afraid of me. I that come here am a Fairy Knight, who bear arms and go a-riding for love of chivalry and combat. Know that I have loved you many a year, and would fain wed you."

The Princess wept to find herself in his power. She cried for help, but none came; and at length the Fairy Knight persuaded her, and took her to a hermit's cell at a little distance, where they were wedded. Together they abode in the forest for a space, and then the knight gave her unwelcome tidings.

"Lady wife, I must leave you," he said: "I am bidden to go to another place speedily. But remember that you are my wife, whom I have wedded here in this forest. It is fated that for many a year you shall not have speech with me again. But I know by magic arts that you shall bear me a son. Give him this my sword when he is of age to wear it. It is a good blade; but it has no point, for with it I slew a giant, and the point broke off short at the blow I dealt him. Take the sword, lady wife: fare you well. If it chances that I meet my son in the time to come, I shall know him by this broken sword, for I myself have the point of it. Take these gloves also; they are enchanted, and their virtue is such that they can be worn by none save by you and by the lady whom my son shall wed."

He went from her at that, as suddenly as he had come. The Princess wept sorely at his going. But soon she took his sword and the enchanted gloves, and hid them in her gown, and wandered through the forest until at last she was found by those who had set forth in search of her.

The Princess abode at the King's court as before, and said nothing of the strange knight whose wife she was. In due time she bore a son, but feared to

"She saw coming towards her a knight."

tell her father of it because of his vow that none should wed her who could not overcome him in the lists. She called to her a trusted handmaiden, and gave the boy to her to keep for a little, till he was old enough to send away secretly. Then, while the child was yet a babe, he was richly clad and laid in a cradle, with four pounds of gold and ten of silver, and the enchanted gloves. About his neck she tied a letter to be read by whoever found the babe: "For the love of our Lord," the letter said, "if any man find this hapless child, let him procure Christian baptism for him, and help him to live till he be grown to man's estate. The silver and gold which are here shall pay for his nurture. When the boy shall be twenty years of age, let him be told where he was found and how he was brought up; and these gloves shall be given him then also; they are magic gloves, and none can wear them save his mother and the lady whom he shall wed. If any man brings him up as I have said, and tells him all these things duly, the blessing of Heaven shall surely come upon him."

The handmaid took the child in his cradle, and bore him by night to a far-off hermitage. Outside the door of it she laid him, and sped back to the Princess once more, and comforted her in her grief at losing her son.

Early in the morning the hermit rose, and found the babe at his door. He read the letter, and saw that the child was nobly born. The gloves and the treasure he kept safely till the boy should have grown of age to use them, for he would not take money for an act

of kindness; but the child himself he gave in charge to his sister, a merchant's wife in a town hard by, having first christened him by the name of Degoré, which means, "almost lost." There for ten years Degoré abode, and was well and seemly nurtured. In his tenth year he went back to the old hermit, who for another ten years taught him clerkly and knightly lore, so that he was more learned and more courteous and more skilful in arms than any of his time.

When Degoré had come to his twentieth year, the hermit gave him his little store of wealth and the magic gloves, and told him all that he knew of his birth; for till then Degoré had believed the merchant and his wife to be his father and mother, and the hermit his uncle. When he heard the truth, he knelt down and thanked the hermit for his care, and gave him half his money for a remembrance of him.

"Now it is time that I went into the world," he said. "I will never cease to wander till I have found my kindred."

"Nay," said the hermit, "you cannot go forth as a wandering knight without a horse and good armour."

"I will take something instead at first," he answered. And he hewed down, for a staff, a great oak sapling; he was so strong that if ever he smote a man with this staff, that man, be he never so stout and valiant, must fall.

Then Degoré received the good hermit's blessing, and set out on his adventures. All that day he saw and met no man till it was far past noon. Then he heard a great noise in a valley near, and the sound

of sturdy blows. He ran swiftly to the spot, and saw a strange sight. A dragon great and grim, full of fire and venom, with a wide throat and monstrous tusks, was pressing sore a gallant Earl. The dragon had the feet of a lion; its body was as large as a wine tun, and measured twenty-two feet from head to tail. Its eyes were bright as glass, and its scales hard as brass, shining against the sun. As it raised its great neck to strike—a neck as thick as a horse's—it breathed out fire.

The Earl defended himself in manly sort, and laid on stoutly with his sword. But he was no match for the dragon, and his sword glanced harmlessly off the beast's iron scales. As Degoré came up, the Earl had turned to flee; he ran from tree to tree, hiding for a moment, and then hastening on; and as he ran, he suddenly was aware of Degoré, and cried to him in a loud voice, "Help me, for charity's sake: help!"

Thereupon Degoré hastened into the open, though he had no weapon but his oaken club. The dragon saw him coming, and turned towards him, leaving the Earl. It blew and roared as if it would swallow him. But Degoré took his club in his hand with high courage, and smote the creature on the head, and brake the bone of its forehead. At that stout blow the dragon fell down, beating the earth with its tail; and though the lashing tail struck Degoré full hard, he laid on bravely with the club, and at last saw the dragon dead as a stone.

"Young sir," said the Earl, "you have quitted your-

self valiantly, and served me well. Come with me to my castle, and I will reward you."

They went to the Earl's castle, and feasted with great mirth and joy. When they had made an end of their rejoicings, the Earl said to Degoré, "You have fought well for me this day. I would fain have you in my service. Abide here at my castle, and be my man, and you shall have my daughter for your wife."

"I thank you for your grace, lord Earl," said Degoré; "but I must needs be wary in such a matter. I am under a vow to seek out my kinsmen, whose very name I know not. And I can wed none but her whose hands certain enchanted gloves which I have will fit exactly. If I may make trial with these gloves, I will say yea or nay to you truly, Sir Earl."

"So be it," said the Earl. "My daughter shall put on the gloves, and all the ladies of her train."

The Earl's daughter and all the ladies of his court were brought to try the magic gloves. One after the other they essayed to put them on, but none could succeed. Then Degoré, remembering the counsel that had been given him with the gloves, told the Earl that he must go a-wandering once more, for not yet had he found his kin or the lady whom he might wed. He took his leave honourably; and at his going the Earl bestowed on him a fair steed for battle, and a palfrey for riding upon the road, and noble armour, with a bright sword, and a squire to attend him; and last of all he knighted him, saying that he was worthier to go forth on horse and under arms than on foot with but a club for weapon.

"The dragon blew and roared as if it would swallow him."

Sir Degoré and the Broken Sword

Forth Sir Degoré rode with his new arms, and for many days wandered as a knight-errant. At length he came to a city where was a great gathering of earls and barons and knights.

"What tidings?" he asked a sergeant whom he met. "Whence are all these knights come?"

"The King has held a great council, sir," answered the man, "and he has proclaimed that if any man can overthrow him in the lists, he shall have his daughter the Princess for wife, and this kingdom for his heritage, for there is no other heir. Many have essayed this combat before now, but have failed. Of some the King broke the back in fight, of others the neck; some he pierced through the body. Each one he maimed and hurt, so great a warrior is he."

"I am a stalwart man," said Sir Degoré. "I have a steed and weapons of my own, and never yet have I met the man who could withstand me. I will ride against this King."

He rode to the King's court, and knelt before him and greeted him.

"Sir King," he cried. "I have heard your proclamation and would fain tilt against you in the lists."

"I will refuse no man's challenge," said the King. "To-morrow we will fight."

On the morrow the lists were set ready for the fray. The King came clad in splendid armour, surrounded by courtiers and friends; but Degoré knew no man, but trusted only in the help of God and his own valour.

The King was a skilful and cunning fighter, and at the first shock he aimed to break Degoré's neck; his

lance struck full on Degoré's helmet, and so stout was the blow that the shaft broke. But Degoré held firm in his saddle, and his feet were not driven from the stirrups.

"Never has it befallen me," said the King, in wonder, "that a man could withstand that blow."

He took a stronger lance. "I will break his back, if not his neck, or go from the lists for ever," he said. And with that he thundered down the lists to meet Degoré.

The lance struck Degoré full in the breast, and was not broken at first. Degoré sat his horse firmly, but the steed reared up with the shock of the blow, and came nigh to falling over backwards with him. But as the steed gave way, the King's lance bent and was broken, and once more Degoré came off unharmed, though he rode out of the lists ashamed that he had been so near defeat.

"Twice hath the King smitten me," he thought, "and I have not touched him yet. Now I must quit my best."

With that he turned his horse, and rode against the King with set, grim face. Together they rushed at full speed, and both lances struck full on the opposing shields and were shivered.

"Bring me a shaft that will not break," cried the King. "By my troth, I will throw him though he be as strong as Samson."

He took a great lance stronger than all the others, and once more the two met. But the King this time missed his aim, while Degoré struck him fair and true. The King's horse rose on its hind-legs with the

blow, and Sir Degoré hastened to strike once more before it could recover. Out of the saddle the King was hurled, heels over head, and lay vanquished on the ground.

The victory was with Degoré, and all the spectators cheered his prowess. When the King rose, he spoke fairly to Degoré.

"Come, sir knight, the victory is yours. If you are as gentle a man as you are valiant in the fight, you shall have my daughter and after my death my kingdom."

Then was Degoré glad and blithe, and thanked the King for the gift in seemly wise. But he was mindful of the magic gloves, and told the King of his vow that he would wed no woman who could not put on the gloves.

"What is this, Sir Degoré?" said the King. "Let the Princess try the gloves. If they fit her, then all is well; but if not, then we will take counsel about this vow of yours."

Degoré brought out the gloves, and the Princess was sent for. But when she came and saw the gloves, she turned pale, and then red again. She took them in her hands, and put them on; and lo, the gloves fitted as close as her own skin.

"My lord King," she said, "I must needs now tell you a thing which I had hoped to hide from all men. Many years ago I was wedded secretly, and this knight must needs be my son, since he has the magic gloves that were mine, and knows the virtue that is in them."

Sir Degoré had indeed come by chance to the court of his mother's father, and fought with him. He knew that the Princess spoke truth, for the gloves fitted her. He took his mother in his arms and kissed her, and great was their joy. But the King was sore amazed, for he knew not what their sayings meant.

"Daughter, what is this thing?" he asked.

"Father, this knight is my son," she answered. "Twenty years ago I was married in the forest." And with that she told him all that had happened.

The King heard the Princess's tale with great wonder. But he was well pleased that in Degoré he had found an heir to his throne, and that, too, the most valiant knight with whom he had ever jousted.

"Dear mother," said Sir Degoré, when the King had heard all the tale, "tell me where I can find the Fairy Knight my father? To what land shall I turn? I long and yearn to seek him."

"Son, I can tell you nought of him," she answered, "save this one thing, that he gave me his own sword and bade me bestow it on you if you lived and came to man's estate."

She fetched the sword and showed it to him. It was broad, and long, and heavy. No such sword was to be seen in all that kingdom. But there was no point to it.

"Who bore this sword was a man indeed," said Degoré. "Now have I that which I will keep. Henceforth I will journey till, if it be God's will, I find my sire."

In the city he rested that night. At daybreak on

the morrow he rose, and when he had prayed, put on his armour and rode out of the city, with only his squire to attend him. Many a pace and many a day's journey he rode, ever speeding westward, till at length he came to a forest. Through the forest he rode long, mile after mile, and found no trace of man, though wild beasts were there in great plenty. So long he rode that the sun sank down in the heavens and night drew nigh without his finding any place to lodge.

Suddenly he was aware of a moat, and on the other side of it a fair castle of lime and stone. Yet no man was in sight, neither were any guards upon its walls.

"Come what may," said he to his squire, "I ride no further this day. We will abide here, and ask lodging at this castle for charity's sake, if so be that living man dwell therein. Sound upon your trumpet."

The squire blew a call loudly; but there came no answer. Again he blew, and after that again, but no sign of life came from the castle. The drawbridge was down, the great gate open wide; and at last Sir Degoré and his squire rode boldly in without further tarrying. They stabled their horses; there was great plenty of corn and hay for them. Then Sir Degoré strode into the hall of the castle, and called loudly; but no man answered.

In the midst of the hall was a fire burning. "I wonder who made this fire, my lord," said the squire.

"If he comes hither this night, I will abide his coming, whatever he says," said Sir Degoré.

He sat him down at the daïs, and made himself well at ease. Suddenly he was aware of four maidens, fair and free, who came in at the door of the hall. Two of them bore bows and arrows, as if for the chase; and the other two carried the deer which they had just slain for venison.

Sir Degoré rose up from his seat, and greeted the maidens courteously. But they answered never a word. They passed through the hall into a chamber beyond, and shut the door after them.

In a little while came another into the hall, a dwarf. Four foot was the length of him, though his hands and feet were as large as a full-grown man's. His face was milk-white and goodly, and his beard was as crisp and yellow as wax. He wore a surcoat of green, edged with black and white fur; his shoes were long and curved at the toes like a knight's.

Sir Degoré looked on him, and did him a reverence; but the dwarf answered no word, but made ready to set the board. He brought trestles and laid the board on them, and on it a fair white cloth. Bread he brought, and wine white and red, and he lighted torches round the hall, and made all things ready as if for a feast.

When all was prepared, from a chamber door came a lady fair and bright, and with her fifteen maidens, some clad in red, some in green, comely of body and sweet of looks. They sat them down at the board on the daïs, the lady in the midst of her maids; it was as fair and goodly a sight as might be.

Sir Degoré greeted them, but they answered him not.

The lady sat down to meat, and her damsels with her. The dwarf served them blithely with rich foods, and filled their cups with wine. Sir Degoré, with all courtesy, set a chair by the lady, and sat thereon, and took a knife, and eat. But he eat little, for all his looks were upon the fair lady; never had he seen one so lovely.

When they had supped the dwarf removed the cloth, and bore away the board and trestles. The lady and her maidens washed their hands, and went out of the hall to a chamber, whither Sir Degoré followed. The lady sat herself down on a couch, with a handmaiden at her feet; and she took a harp and played so sweetly that Sir Degoré fell into sleep at the sound. When she ceased he did not wake; and the lady caused a pillow be put under his head, and warm coverings over his body, and left him there.

On the morrow Sir Degoré was awakened by the lady. "Arise," she said, "and go."

"Dear lady," answered Sir Degoré, "forgive me for sleeping here. Your sweet harp brought slumber upon me. Now tell me, lady, ere I go, who is lord of this land and castle? And are you widow or maid or wife?"

The lady sighed and began to weep. "Sir, I would fain tell you all. This is my castle, and the maidens and the dwarf whom you saw are all my retinue. My father was a rich baron, and I his only child. He had many a town and castle, and I inherited them from him. So rich am I that many knights have

come to seek my hand from far countries. There was one, a giant, who was strongest and fiercest of them all: I ween in all Britain there is no man so strong as he. He loved me sorely, but I could not love him. But when he saw that he could not win me by love, he turned to force. He has slain all knights who would have defended me, one on each day for many days past. Yesterday he slew the last of them, and now I have left only my dwarf and my twelve maidens, for protection against him."

Thus she spoke, and as she ended she swooned for very fear of this terrible lover. Sir Degoré looked on her with great pity, and, when her maidens had restored her out of her swoon, "Lovely dame," quoth he, "I will help you with all my might."

"Alas, it is no avail against this giant," she said. "But if you will rid me of him, you shall have my hand and all my goods and riches."

Even as she spoke a maiden came running, and cried: "Here comes our enemy. Draw up the bridge and shut the gate, or he will slay every one of us."

Sir Degoré started up. Through a window he saw the giant, well-armed and stout of body. He armed himself speedily, and rode out across the drawbridge to do battle for his lady.

The two galloped together. So fierce was the giant's onset that Sir Degoré's horse fell, and his back was broken. But Sir Degoré recovered himself, and drew from its sheath his father's sword.

"Alight, base knight," he cried. "Do battle on foot, or I will slay your steed outright."

The giant lighted down from his great horse, and they fought on foot, with swords. But Sir Degoré's sword was too strong for his enemy. With a great blow he clove the giant's helm, head, and neckpiece all together, so that he fell down dead as a stone.

The lady watched the combat from her castle, and when she saw the giant fall, came down and greeted her knight.

"Sir, I pray you dwell with me," she said, when she had given him thanks for his prowess. "All my lands will I give you, and I will be your wife."

"Dame, can you wear these gloves?" said Sir Degoré.

He gave her the enchanted gloves. She took them and drew them on; they fitted her closely and well.

"You shall be my wife," said Sir Degoré, with great joy in his heart. "But I have a quest, dear lady, and may not wed you yet. I must needs fare into the world, and cannot abide with you now. I must ride till I find the Fairy Knight my sire. Give me leave to go from you for a year; then will I come to you again."

The lady mourned at this saying, but could not but bid him go. Forth rode Sir Degoré once more, and wandered through divers countries, over hill and dale, through wood and forest, pricking ever westwards.

After many days he came suddenly upon his last adventure. In a little dale, he met a doughty knight upon a fair steed, clad in rich armour. His shield was of azure, and the sign on it was three boars' heads of gold.

When he saw Sir Degoré, the knight cried out in a loud voice, "Villain, what do you here in my forest, slaying my deer?"

"I slay no deer," answered Sir Degoré, gently. "I am an adventurous knight, riding to seek wars and fighting."

"If you come to seek war," said the strange knight, "here you have found your desire. Arm you now where you stand."

Sir Degoré did on his arms, and took a fair keen lance that his lady had given him. The two knights rushed together. At the shock of their meeting neither was harmed; but their two horses were slain, so fiercely did they come together. They leapt to their feet, and drew swords. Long and bitterly did they fight, but could not wound one another.

At last they rested for a space.

"Where were you born, gentle knight?" asked the stranger. "You fight well."

"I am a knight of England, where I was born," answered Sir Degoré. "A King's daughter was my mother, but who my sire was none knows! I am called Sir Degoré."

The strange knight's eyes fell on Degoré's pointless sword as he spoke. He turned and drew out from his wallet a piece of steel. Then he took the sword by the blade and held the piece of steel to it: it fitted exactly. It was the broken point of the sword which the Fairy Knight had given Sir Degoré's mother.

"Sir Degoré," said the knight, "you are my son.

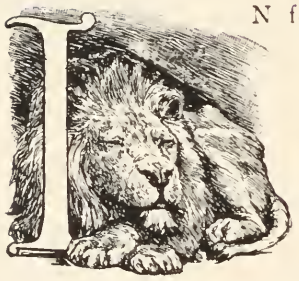
"The lady came down and greeted her knight."

We will fight no more. Take me with you to the Princess your mother, my wife."

Sir Degoré saw that it was indeed as the knight said. Back rode father and son together; and when they came to the King's court, the Fairy Knight was made known to all men as the husband of the Princess. Then Sir Degoré rode back to his lady in her castle, and wedded her with great feastings and rejoicing. His quest was ended, and no longer did he ride abroad, but abode in peace and happiness with his wife to the end of their days.

Guy of Warwick

I. Guy wins his Spurs



IN former days a certain Rohaud was one of the most powerful nobles in England. Rich he was, and of great might; much store of gold and silver lay in his strong castles, and so doughty was he that no man in all England durst ride against him when he was armed in his pride. He was Earl of Warwick, of Oxford, and of Buckingham.

Earl Rohaud had a daughter named Felice, whose like, for beauty, was not to be seen upon the earth. Gentle she was, and courteous, and wise, and free, and learned in the seven arts: cunning masters had come from Toulouse to teach her, and had instructed her in knowledge of the stars, and arithmetic, and letters, and eloquence, in music, geometry, and all manner of learning. There was no maiden so fair in hall or in bower.

To win Felice to wife many earls and barons and knights had come from every corner of the world; but not one of them would she wed.

The Earl ruled his dominions justly and well. He had for steward a very prudent and wise man, one Segward: no lord of that day had a better steward or truer man. Segward had a son named Guy, a youth courteous and free, cup-bearer to Earl Rohaud. Guy had been taught all knightly ways by Heraud of Ardern, a famous knight; and so good a pupil was he that there was none at Earl Rohaud's court who was more loved, or who could vie with him at hunting and hawking and warlike exercises.

It was the custom of Earl Rohaud to hold festival for many days at the season of Pentecost in each year. To that feast came all the chivalry of England, with many fair ladies and maidens of renown. One year, when Guy was nigh man's estate, it fell to his lot to wait upon the Earl at the feast.

"Guy," said Earl Rohaud suddenly, "go to my daughter and her ladies, and serve their table well."

"My lord, I do your bidding blithely," answered Guy, who had looked upon the fair Felice as yet only from a distance.

Guy served Felice courteously and well. He was very comely to look upon, and all the maidens, even Felice herself, spoke to him fairly and sweetly. As for Guy, he no sooner came near Felice than he fell in love with her.

When the feast was over Guy went alone to his chamber, and thought upon this new love that had carried him away. "This is my lord's daughter," he said to himself, "and I am but his cup-bearer. If Earl Rohaud knew that I loved Felice, he would hang

me or behead me or burn me straightway for my insolence. Yet I cannot bear to keep my love secret from her. I will tell her now, come what may."

He sought audience of the lady Felice privately. When he came before her he fell on his knees, trembling, and spoke in a low firm voice: "For love of you, dear lady, I die. There is nought under heaven, good or evil, that I would not do for you. Unless you have pity on me, I shall slay myself for sorrow."

"You are a foolish dreamer, Guy," answered Felice. "You are overweening, unless you take me to have as little wits as you. What could I, an Earl's daughter, have to do with you, the son of my father's steward? The great men of England have sought my hand in vain; how then should you hope to be more successful? Begone from my sight, and trouble me no more."

Guy obeyed with rueful cheer. He went to his chamber, and rent his clothes, and mourned so stedfastly that he fell grievously ill. He cared nought for his life, and would not try to win back his health, but lay like one about to die. The Earl and all his court were much troubled, for Guy was well loved; but they could not discover what ailed him, for Guy said no word of his love to any man. Wise physicians came, and tended him, but availed nothing; and when one of them said, "He has a fever," Guy answered "Yes," being content that they should think him sick to death, and commend him to God's grace: which indeed they did with sorry hearts.

Felice heard of Guy's illness, but heeded it little, until on a certain night she had a dream. In this dream an angel appeared to her, and bade her look favourably on Guy's love, for he would before long win great honour for her sake. Thereafter she purposed, if ever Guy spoke to her again, to grant him mercy.

The next day Guy seemed to be at the very point of death. He lay in his chamber, looking out of the window upon the curving walls of the castle, which were stretched out on either side of him. "Alas," he said to himself, "there is no hope for me: this great castle belongs to my lady's sire, the Earl of Warwick and of Oxford and of Buckingham, whereas I am but a poor squire's son. I must needs die of this love that fills and overflows my heart. Nevertheless, I will try whether I may not see Felice again ere I die."

He rose from his couch, all weak as he was, and crept painfully out of his chamber, down the stairs, and into an arbour in Felice's garden, where he knew she was wont to walk. There he found his lady; but he had only strength to gasp, "Lady Felice, I love you; I have broken your command and come to see you; I pray you forgive me," before he fell in a swoon at her very feet.

Felice and her maidens raised him up, and in a little time restored him to his senses. When he remembered where he was, he would have gone miserably away; but Felice held him in converse, remembering the angel's message in her dream.

"Guy," she said, "why would you die for love? Why not put aside your love and live? If I were to tell my father the Earl that you have dared to love me, he would hang you."

"I wish it were even so," sighed Guy. "I cannot live without you."

"Certes, Guy, your love is very great," said Felice, relenting a little, yet not willing to tell him that she loved him. "You almost lose your wits from it."

"Do not mock me, Felice."

"I do not mock you, Guy. Hear now what I must say to you, and take no offence thereat. You know full well that I may not love you: you are a poor cup-bearer, I an Earl's daughter: how then can I love you? I can only love one of noble rank. If you were a knight, good and hardy and well-tried in arms, I might look on you with more readiness."

At that Guy's heart was filled with joy. He did a reverence to Felice, and took his leave. In a few days, so great was his gladness, he had forgotten all his sorrow, and came back to his duties as blithe and merry as a bird.

Before long Guy sought audience of Earl Rohaud. Falling on his knees before him, he said humbly, "My lord, I beg you to knight me and give me arms, if I be worthy of so great an honour."

The Earl knew Guy's worthiness to be knighted, and at a great feast which was held soon after, he dubbed him knight, with twenty other youths of valour and good birth.

As soon as possible, Guy went to Felice. "Lady

Felice," he said, "I am knighted: I may declare my love to you worthily."

"Nay, Guy," said Felice, "you may be a knight in rank, but you are not yet a knight in deed. You have done nought in arms, you have won no fame. When your name is on all men's lips, then come to me and speak to me of love." For Felice wished to prove his valour before she obeyed her dream and looked on him with favour.

Guy said no word, but left her, sad at heart, yet resolved to win her. He went straightway to his father the steward, and did him a reverence, and asked him a boon.

"I have been dubbed knight, my father," he said: "I pray you grant me that I may win honour as a knight. Let me go overseas and play my part worthily among other men."

"So be it, Guy," answered Segward: "I will not say you nay if you seek fame in other lands. God grant you safe return. Take what gold and silver, horses and arms, may be needful for your intent. Sir Heraud shall go with you, for he is wise and discreet, as befits his years; Sir Thorold and Sir Urry also shall be your comrades."

Soon all was ready, and Guy set out with his three companions, richly equipped in all things. They sailed overseas, and came in time to the coast of Normandy, and so at last to Rouen. There they lodged for a time, to gather news.

Ere long they saw a great to-do in the town; knights and squires went to and fro, blacksmiths were hard

at work sharpening swords and lances, bright flags and streamers were flown on every house. Guy sent for the host of the inn, and asked what these preparations meant.

"Have you not heard, good sir?" answered the host. "Know then that to-morrow will be held in this city a tournament, in honour of the fair daughter of Regnier, the Emperor of Germany. Many lords and knights of renown have come hither to joust. The prize in the tournament is a milk-white falcon, a white horse, and two white greyhounds; and if the victor be not already pledged in his own country to some fair lady, he may ask in marriage the Emperor's daughter herself."

"That is good hearing, master host," answered Guy. "I give you thanks. Go now to my squires and bid them bestow on you a white palfrey, in reward for your glad tidings."

The host departed. Guy and his comrades vowed to enter the lists on the morrow, and straightway fell to making their arms and gear ready for the fray.

What more need I say? Many a seemly knight came to that tournament, but Guy overthrew all whom he met: Gaire, the Emperor's own son, fell before him, and Otho, Duke of Pavia, who vowed to make Guy rue the day of his victory, and afterwards came nigh accomplishing his desire. Heraud, Thorold, and Urry likewise fought well. But Guy showed such might that all men judged him the best knight of the day; and when the jousting was ended, the white falcon, and the horse, and the greyhounds were

given to him. He sent them to Earl Rohaud as signs of his prowess, and, having done honour to the Emperor and his fair daughter, set forth to roam yet further.

For a year's space Guy and his comrades wandered in divers lands, fighting in many wars, jousting often in tournaments, and winning fair fame as bold and hardy knights. At the end of a year, they returned home to England, Guy hoping that by now Felice would be willing to listen to him.

"I have come back to you, dear lady," he said as soon as he saw her, "because I have done your bidding. For your sake I have ventured my life in many battles; yet it is you who gave me that life, for had you not been gracious to me, I should have died ere now by my own hand. My life is yours. Tell me your will, now that I have come again to give you my love."

"You have done well, Sir Guy, but not well enough," answered Felice haughtily. "Your fame is fair and great, but not greater and fairer than that of many another knight. If I were to wed you, you would win no more glory, but would give up fighting, and live a life of sloth and ease. I love you well, and will take you for my lover. But I will not wed you till you are known as the best knight under the wide heaven, the very flower of all the world's knighthood."

Guy sighed deeply. "I do your will, lady Felice, in all things," he said. "I will go a-wandering again, since for your sake I must win glory; no fear of death shall hinder me."

He went from her, and told Earl Rohaud and his father that he was fain to journey overseas again. They said many things to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. He would neither stay at home nor tell them the reason of his going. And so he set forth once more to win such fame as fell to no other knight of that day.

II. The Enmity of Otho

Duke Otho of Pavia, whom Guy overthrew in the tournament at Rouen, cherished deep hatred because of his defeat; and he plotted to be revenged on Guy. Guy, when he set forth from England again, went to many countries in turn, jousting in tourneys and fighting in all lands, and at last came into Italy not far from Pavia. Here it chanced that he was wounded slightly in a tournament; and when Otho heard of this, he thought that now he would easily gain his end and take vengeance on Guy.

He set spies at work, and learnt the road which Guy with his comrades, Urry, Thorold, and Heraud, meant to take after the tournament. He summoned to him one Earl Lambard, and fifteen other knights bold and fierce.

"Lambard, and you, my friends," he said, "I have called you hither that you may avenge me on a traitor who is my bitter foe, none other than Guy of Warwick. He journeys this day by such and such a road, in the forest hard by this place. Do you there

lie in ambush, and when he comes with his three comrades, fall upon them suddenly. Kill his three friends, if you will, but himself save alive, and bring him to me, that I may make his death more hard for him. With sorrow and with woe shall he end; never shall he go forth of my dungeons, when once I have him there."

The base knights did as he bade them, and hid themselves in the forest. Presently came Guy riding slowly on a little mule. His wound hurt him sorely, and he was glad of this ride in peace under the shade of great trees, without the weight of his heavy armour, which was carried after him on his war-horse.

Suddenly he saw the sun gleaming on polished steel at a little distance; and a few moments after, a horse whinnied.

"There is some mischief here," said Guy to his comrades. "We are betrayed."

He sprang from his mule and began to arm hastily. "Dear Guy," said Heraud, "you are wounded. Let us not fight. I think from the gleaming arms yonder there must be many men in front of us, and we are but four. Do you turn back: there is no dishonour in retreat if you are wounded. We will stay here and abide the onset; do you save yourself."

"Nay, Heraud," answered Guy, with high courage, as befits a stout knight, "if you abide here to die, I too will die with you."

With that he made ready to fight. First there came a Lombard riding at him, a fell knight full of pride.

"Guy," cried the Lombard, "yield to us, or you

are all dead men. We have vowed to take you dead or alive to Duke Otho."

As he spoke, Guy smote him through the heart, and laid him dead on the grass.

"By the vows I pay to my lady," he said, "you shall not keep your vow to Otho."

Another Lombard came against him. "Nor you, traitor; you shall not take me to your proud Duke," he cried; and he ran him through the body with his sword, so that he died.

Meanwhile his three comrades had slain three who rode against them, so that five of the enemy were gone. But the stoutest were those that remained. Earl Lambard thrust Sir Urry through the heart with his lance, and laid him low; but in a moment Guy was upon him, and bore him down, and slew him. Hugo, nephew of Duke Otho, beat Sir Thorold from his horse, and pierced him through the heart. But Sir Heraud turned upon him like a swift hound, and smote him dead at one blow. Even as he struck, one Gauter, a doughty knight, felled Heraud with a mighty stroke, and he tumbled headlong and lay like a dead man.

And now Guy was left alone. When he saw Heraud fall, he turned on Gauter so fiercely that fire sprang from his horse's hoofs.

"You shall pay sore for this day, sir knight," he cried; "never shall you live to boast of this deed."

He swung his great sword aloft, and smote down with all his force; clean through the helm of Gauter

the blade shore, through head and shoulders and breast, and clove him to the very pommel of his saddle.

Guy turned on his other foes. So fierce was his onset that ere long but two were left. But he was very weary and sorely wounded, and Sir Guichard, one of the two remaining knights, and the most valiant of all Duke Otho's men, called on him to surrender.

"Yield, Guy," he cried; "all your friends are slain, your armour is pierced, your limbs full weary. You must needs yield yourself my prisoner."

Guy answered no word, but fell upon the two incontinently. One he slew outright, and Sir Guichard he wounded. "Yield you, Sir Guichard," he said; "it is my turn to bid you lay down your arms."

But Sir Guichard for answer turned his horse, and galloped away in full flight. He returned to Otho at Pavia, and told how ill he and his comrades had fared; and Otho was more fiercely set upon harming Guy than ever.

Guy did not pursue Guichard far, for his horse was as weary as himself. He looked upon the dead bodies of his dear comrades, and his heart was heavy within him.

"Alas, Felice," he said, "for your sake, fair maid, many brave knights have fallen this day, and Sir Heraud, the flower of them all, lies here at my feet."

He rode away from the place till he came to a hermit's cell in the forest. He called the good hermit out, and took him back to where his friends lay, and bade him give them Christian burial. For his services he bestowed on him a horse; and then he took on

his own horse the body of Sir Heraud, which he was loath to leave, and rode away.

Presently he came to a rich abbey, where he was entertained hospitably. When he was refreshed, he rode on, leaving there Sir Heraud's body, to be cared for. But his wounds were too serious for him to fight again for many a day. He could not journey openly through Italy, for fear of Duke Otho's enmity. So he went secretly back to the hermit, and dwelt in his cell till his wounds were healed.

As soon as he was strong enough to ride and fight, he rode away from Italy to Saxony, and then to Burgundy, to the court of Duke Milon, who entertained him well. Here Guy abode some time, fighting and jousting.

At length his thoughts turned again to England. He saw no hope, as yet, of winning fresh fame, for his feats in arms had won him renown throughout Christendom, and unless some great and unexpected adventure befell him, he could have no higher glory than was his already. He took leave of Duke Milon, and set forth to ride through France to a port whence he might set sail for England.

He had not ridden far before he was aware of a man sitting at rest upon a headland jutting into the sea. The man was clad in pilgrim's weeds, and his face was well-nigh covered with a hood, so that Guy could not see it.

"What news, gentle pilgrim?" asked Guy, when he came near the stranger. "Whence have you come?"

"From Lombardy. But I know no news. I have

long lain sick, for I was sore wounded in a fight for my dear lord against Duke Otho of Pavia. For my lord's sake I wear these weeds; I wander as a pilgrim till I find him again."

Guy knew not what this strange story might mean. He thought that his three comrades, Heraud, Urry, and Thorold were all slain; yet here was one who spoke of fighting against Duke Otho in Lombardy.

"What was your lord's name?" he asked.

"Guy of Warwick," answered the pilgrim, "the best knight ever known."

Guy trembled at hearing himself spoken of. "What is your own name?" he asked eagerly.

"Heraud," replied the pilgrim.

Guy threw himself from his horse, and ran to the pilgrim, and drew the hood from his face. It was indeed his loved comrade Heraud, come to life as it were from the dead.

Heraud soon told his tale. Guy had left, as he thought, his dead body at the abbey. But he was not dead; he was but stunned by Gauter's blow in the great fight. The abbot, being very skilled in healing wounds and all manner of ailments, soon saw that Heraud still lived, and by his care and wisdom nursed him back to strength again. Since then he had wandered in search of Guy.

The two friends were overjoyed to meet again, and, as soon as Heraud had been re-armed and equipped fully, they set forth to go to England together. They journeyed through France till they came at last to St. Omer, where they rested a little.

As they lay at their inn, they heard tidings which once more turned Guy's face away from England. Segwin, Duke of Louvain, had by chance slain a cousin of his overlord, Regnier, the Emperor of Germany, in a quarrel; Regnier, very wroth, had marched against Segwin with an army, and laid waste his lands, and was even now besieging him in his strong city of Arascon. Segwin was hard pressed, and begged Guy or any other knights-errant who were able to come to his aid.

Guy and Heraud made up their minds to help Segwin. They mustered as quickly as they could three score of bold knights, and rode to Arascon. They contrived to enter the besieged town secretly, and on the morrow after their coming sallied forth and attacked Regnier's men so fiercely that they put them utterly to flight.

The Emperor was very wroth when he heard of this defeat, and he sent against Arascon a fresh host, wherein fought Otho of Pavia, and Terry, son of Earl Aubry, and many another gallant warrior. But even thus he could not prevail. Guy and his knights sallied forth, and attacked the new army so fiercely that it fared no better than the first, and fled headlong. Guy and his men pursued it many leagues, taking great plenty of prisoners; and Guy himself wounded Duke Otho sorely, and took Gaire, the Emperor's son, captive.

Thereafter Regnier himself came against the town, and sat down before it with a great army, to starve it into yielding. Never would he fight a pitched battle,

but lay idle outside with his men at a little distance, suffering no man to leave the town and none to come in.

But on a certain day a spy brought news to Guy that the Emperor would that day hunt in the forest near the town. Guy took his men and went to the forest; and before long he had surprised Regnier and cut him off, unarmed and helpless.

"God save you, sire," said Guy courteously. "Duke Segwin would fain have had me meet you; this is a good hap. The Duke bids me ask you to lodge with him in Arascon. He will give you a seemly welcome, with a feast of swans and cranes and herons, and will make you right well at ease, if you do but honour him by coming. And I say to you that he will yield himself and his city and his lands to you at that feast. Do you therefore come with me, Sir Emperor, seeing that you are in my power."

The Emperor could not but go with Guy; and that night he supped royally in Arascon, and was honourably entertained.

On the morrow Duke Segwin summoned to him all those of the Emperor's men whom he held prisoners, among them the Emperor's own son, and begged them to plead with Regnier for him. Then, when they had promised him this, he went before the Emperor bareheaded and barefooted, with a rope round his neck, and in his hand an olive branch.

"Mercy, sire," he cried, falling on his knees. "If I have harmed you in this war, put not the blame

on me. I slew your cousin in fair fight; he would fain have slain me. Have mercy, lord Emperor."

Thereupon Gaire and the other prisoners in turn begged Regnier to be merciful; and he, seeing that Segwin by Guy's advice had spoken him fair and courteously, and had sought to take no harsh advantage of him, relented and forgave the Duke. Guy himself he asked to enter his service; and under him Guy and Heraud, putting off for a space their return to England, fought and jousted for many months.

III. Among the Saracens

It chanced that as Guy rode by the seaside one day at this time, he saw a great ship sail into the port hard by. No ship had come thither from afar for many months, and he rode down to the port to hear the news. By now he was weary of fighting in the different countries of Europe, and longed to return to England, unless he could find some new and high adventure first. Great was his joy, then, to learn that the ship bore Greek merchants from Constantinople, with tidings of grievous ill-fortune that had befallen the Christian Greek Emperor Ernis. The Sultan of the Saracens had come against him with a vast host, and besieged him in Constantinople. Ernis was sorely pressed, and unless help came speedily the city and all who were in it must soon be given up to the cruel Saracens.

Sir Guy and many another Christian knight felt

great sorrow at these tidings. They made up their minds to succour Ernis. Before long they brought together well-nigh a thousand goodly knights, and set out for Constantinople, Guy being chosen leader.

They reached Constantinople safely, and Ernis was right glad to see them, and promised to Guy the hand of his daughter Clarice, if he would rid his Empire of the Saracens. It was not long before Guy set to work. With his brave knights he sallied forth from the city and fell upon the enemy; long and fiercely did they fight; Guy slew in mortal combat Coldran, the chief Emir of the Saracens, cousin to the Sultan himself, and did many another deed of valour; and in the end the Saracens were defeated with great slaughter. But they were not driven away from the city, for their army was so huge that Guy and his men had routed only a small part of it. The rest, under the Sultan himself, pressed the siege more closely than ever.

Great fame came to Guy through this battle. But it won him also a fierce and crafty enemy, one Morgadour, steward to Regnier of Germany, who loved the Princess Clarice and was jealous of Guy for his prowess. Many a time did he seek to injure Guy by false tales and slander, and once nearly succeeded in persuading Ernis that Guy was a traitor. But all his plans failed until, as the Sultan's army seemed to grow stronger and stronger without being driven away, he found a chance to bring Guy into great peril.

He learnt by spies that the Sultan had vowed to

put to death every Christian who fell into his hands, whoever he might be and whatever his errand. But at a great council which Ernis held he hid this knowledge, and persuaded the Emperor to announce a plan which Guy could not but fall in with.

"The Sultan is gathering yet more men against us," said Ernis to his lords and barons and knights. "If we do not rid ourselves of him right soon, he will have so many that his very numbers will overcome all our might and skill. Let us therefore end the matter thus: one of us shall fight in single combat with the chiefest warrior in the Sultan's host; if he falls, then will we yield; but if he conquers, then will all the Saracens yield themselves to us."

They cried out assent to his words.

"It is well, friends," said Ernis, who knew nought of the guile in Morgadour's plan. "But there is yet one thing needful. One of us must bear this challenge to the Sultan: and he will go in great peril, for the Sultan is fierce and full of treachery. Who will do this errand?"

Guy and Heraud started up with many another, all eager to bear the Emperor's message to the Sultan. But when they saw that Guy was eager to go, they cried out that he alone was worthy to bear the message and afterwards to be their champion.

Ernis was loath to let Guy go, for he feared treachery, and would fain have kept the best of his knights safe. But at last he was persuaded.

Guy put on his finest armour, and set on his head a gold circlet and a rich plume, and rode

forth from Constantinople alone, for he would have none share the peril with him. Anon he came to the Saracens' camp, and saw in the midst the Sultan's pavilion. He knew it because on top of it was the image of a golden eagle, standing on a great carbuncle stone. All the country seemed full of tents and pavilions, but there was none like the Sultan's.

Guy rode boldly into the midst of the camp, and on through it till he came to the Sultan's pavilion. Within the Sultan and his barons, and ten kings, his vassals, were feasting and holding revelry, when Guy rode into the great tent on his war horse. He halted before the Sultan to give his errand. But the sight of so many foul Saracens, the bitter enemies of all Christendom, so enraged him that he broke out into reviling them.

The Sultan knew not how to answer a word, so great was his wonder. But Guy in a little time grew calmer, and delivered his challenge in seemly wise.

At that the Sultan grew furious with rage. "Dog of a Christian," he cried, "you shall die. Seize him, slaves, and put him to death."

"Guy of Warwick does not die by a Saracen's hand," said Guy.

At the sound of his dreaded name, the Saracens pressed close to take him. But he forced his horse through their midst, and came very near to the Sultan, and with a sudden sweep of his sword clove his pagan head from his body. Then he stooped and picked up the head, and while all there were still aghast at what he had done, turned and rode away at full speed.

Now it chanced that about this time Heraud lay asleep in Constantinople. As he slept, he dreamed that he saw his dear comrade Guy assailed by a host of wild beasts. He woke with a start; and in a moment he knew that his dream was a warning that Guy was in peril. He armed himself with all speed, and called together a band of brave knights. In haste they rode out of Constantinople towards the Saracen camp, ready to give up their lives if only they might bring Guy out of peril.

Before long they saw the dust of many riders coming towards them. Soon they were near enough to distinguish who they were who rode so furiously. Guy was galloping towards Constantinople, his horse very weary, but struggling to reach the city before his pursuers. At his saddle-bow was the Sultan's head. Behind came a host of Saracens, eager to overtake him. But when they saw the Christian knights, well armed and unwearied, they gave up the chase, and turned and rode back to their camp. Not long afterwards, their Sultan being slain, they gave up the siege and went thence. But Guy rode in triumph into Constantinople, and was welcomed by Ernis, who was fain to give him his daughter Clarice in marriage, in reward for his great deeds.

It was many years now since Guy had seen Felice. In those years he had so grown in fame as to be thought the very flower of chivalry of that day, even as Felice had bidden him. Yet he knew not whether, if he returned, his proud lady might not set him yet harder tasks to do. At first, in all his tournaments

"Behind came a host of Saracens, eager to overtake Guy."

and battles, he had fought for her love and glory. But as time passed, he began to forget her a little, until now the Emperor's daughter seemed to him almost as fair as Felice, and Constantinople as good a dwelling-place as far-off Warwick. Yet at first he would not say yes or no to Ernis when he offered him the Princess Clarice, but put him off with doubtful answers.

When the Saracens had gone altogether from Constantinople, Ernis made a great progress through all his dominions, putting aside for a little time Guy's answer. With him went Guy. As they rode through a desert one day, they suddenly were aware of a lion coming towards them. Ernis knew not whether to flee or to await the beast. But Guy, looking more closely, saw that behind it ran some other animal. The lion was running slowly, as if very weary; and when Guy went towards it, it looked at him beseechingly, and seemed to ask him for help. He cast his eyes upon the creature following. It was a great dragon, wounded and weary, but still pursuing the lion.

Guy lost no time. He drew his sword and fell upon the dragon fiercely. Though it was weak from its fight with the lion, it had yet great strength, and it was long before Guy won the mastery. But at last the dragon lay dead before him.

The lion, when it saw its enemy slain, came towards Guy as gently as if it had been a dog, and licked his feet and fawned upon him. By no means would it leave him, but followed him in all his journey with

Ernis, and back to Constantinople at the end. All men who saw it loved its gentleness and friendly mien, save only Morgadour the steward, who still plotted harm to Guy.

When they came back to Constantinople again, Ernis once more asked Guy if he would wed Clarice; and Guy at last answered yes.

Great preparations were made for the wedding; and soon the appointed day came. All was ready, when the wedding ring was brought forth and given to Guy.

At the sight of the ring, Guy's thoughts went suddenly back to Felice. "Ah, fair maid," he thought, "what wrong am I doing you! Forgive me, dear lady; you and no other maid shall have my heart."

With that he swooned. When he came to his senses, he put away from him the courtiers who had gathered round, and bidding them ask Ernis to hold him excused, went to his chamber, and there gave himself up to such misery and sorrow that he fell ill. There he lay for three days, taking no meat nor drink, and seeing no man. But on the third day a thing happened to bring him back to court again.

When Guy fell ill, the faithful lion grew very sad and mournful. It would touch no food, but roamed about the palace looking for its master and making sorry cheer. On the third day of Guy's illness the lion lay asleep in an arbour in the palace garden. Now Sir Morgadour chanced to be in the garden at that time, and, seeing the lion asleep, he stole up and stabbed it deep in the side.

The lion rose with a great roar; but the wound

was mortal. The poor beast could do nought but creep to Guy's chamber, and scratch at the door to be let in, whining sorrowfully. When Guy opened the door, the lion staggered in, and fell dead at his feet.

"Alas, dear lion," said Guy in great wrath, "who has done this wrong? Now my lion is dead, all my joy is gone. There was nought in all this city that I loved better."

In rage and sorrow he drew his sword, and went forth with it in his hand. Soon he met a maiden of the court, and asked her who had slain his lion.

"It was Sir Morgadour," she said. "He stabbed the lion as it lay asleep in the arbour. I saw him from an upper window."

With bitter anger in his heart, Guy sought Sir Morgadour. "Traitor," he cried when he met him, "you have wronged me sorely."

"You lie," said Morgadour smoothly, "or you are mistaken, perchance. What treason or wrong have I done? I slew your lion, it is true; but the creature would have slain me."

Even as he spoke he drew nearer; and suddenly, snatching a dagger from his belt, he tried to stab Guy. But Guy was watching him closely, for he trusted him not. As Morgadour struck, he sprang aside, and swinging his sword aloft, with one blow clave the steward from head to foot.

There was a great outcry in Constantinople when it was known that Guy had slain Morgadour, for Morgadour's master, the Emperor of Germany, was a man of great might, and would be wroth at his

steward's death. But Guy was glad of the fear which Ernis felt at his deed, for now he could without losing his honour give up the hand of Clarice, and go back to Felice. Before long he had told Ernis that he would no longer abide in Constantinople, to bring trouble on the city, but would return to his own land; and Ernis, though he was loath to lose him, could not but let him go.

So Guy left the East, and set out with Heraud to ride back through Europe to England. But he was not to win Felice for many a day yet.

IV. The End of Otho

It was on a day in spring, when every bird is in song, that Guy and Heraud were riding westwards through a forest, on their way towards England. Suddenly, as they rode, they heard a sound as of a man groaning in anguish.

"O death," it seemed to say, "why do you so long tarry? Come to me and free me from this torment."

They listened, and soon were certain whence the voice came. They made their way through the trees and bushes towards the sound, and found a knight lying sorely wounded, almost to death.

"Fair sir," asked Guy, "who are you who cry so grievously?"

"Sir Guy," answered the wounded knight, "I know you well, and have met you in the fight. I am Sir Terry, son of Aubry of Gurmoise, and I serve Loyer,

"'Alas, dear lion, who has done this wrong?'

Duke of Lorraine, for love of his daughter Ozelle. Ozelle loves me and I her, and we had planned to flee together, for Loyer had promised her to Otho of Pavia, so that I durst not ask his leave to wed her. But Otho heard of our plan, and his men fell upon us here as we would have escaped; me they left wounded as you see, and Ozelle they carried off, meaning doubtless to bring her to Otho."

"Otho of Pavia, say you?" said Guy. "It will give me great joy to aid you against him. I too have somewhat to pay him for what he has done to me. Which way did his men ride? It were best to save the lady Ozelle from him before we essay ought else."

Terry showed them the road, and Guy and Heraud galloped off. It was not long before they came up with Otho's men, carrying Ozelle in their midst. They fell upon them furiously, and in a little time put to flight those of them whom they did not slay. Then they rode back with Ozelle to where they had left Terry. But when they came to the place there was no sign of him.

Guy and Heraud searched the ground. Soon they saw the prints of horses' hoofs, going to the place where Terry had lain, and leading away thence into the forest. They left Ozelle there, and followed the tracks as fast as they could, till at length they came up with a little body of horsemen, with Terry in their midst.

The men were servants of Otho, who had chanced to come that way and had carried off their master's enemy when they found him wounded and helpless.

With a great cry Guy and Heraud bore down upon them. So fiercely did they attack that in a little time Otho's men were in full flight, while Guy and Heraud bore Terry back with them towards Ozelle.

But alas! when they came to the place where she should have been, she in turn was not there. No sign of her could they see, and they were about to give up searching for her, when Guy's squires, who had ridden on before him to a town hard by, came riding back.

"Sir," they said, "is all well with you?"

"All is well," answered Guy; "but this knight, Sir Terry, has lost a fair lady in this place."

"She is safe, sir," said one of the squires. "When you did not come after us to the town, we rode back, fearing that some mischance had overtaken you. Here in this forest we found the lady Ozelle, and bore her in safety to the town, when she had told us all that had befallen her. Then we came back to await you."

"It is well," said Guy; and they all rode to the town. There Guy and Heraud rested many days, guarding Terry and Ozelle, and caring for Terry's wounds.

"Sir Terry," said Guy one day, when the knight was well-nigh healed, "I have seen and know that you are a brave man. Will you be my sworn brother in arms, even as Heraud is? Will you plight your word to stand by me in all perils, and fight in my battles, even as I will stand by you and fight for you?"

"Guy," answered Terry, "you do me such honour as could never else come upon me. All men would take pride in being your brother in arms, for you are the very flower of chivalry. Gladly will I plight my word, and may God give me grace to keep it worthily."

So they swore brotherhood and friendship; and it chanced that their bond was put to proof right soon. As they sat one day at the window of their inn, they saw a knight riding wearily by.

"Sir knight," said Guy to him, "I pray you tell me what you seek in this country. Perchance I may give you aid in your quest."

"Sir, I seek the good knight Sir Terry of Gurmoise," answered the knight. "May Heaven guide me to him, for his sire is in sore straits. He is old and cannot bear arms with such might as he wont to show in former days; and many enemies beset him. Duke Otho of Pavia——"

"Ha!" cried Guy, "Otho, say you? I am fain to meet Duke Otho."

"Duke Otho of Pavia," continued the knight, "and Loyer Duke of Lorraine have come against Aubry, Sir Terry's sire, with a great host, vowing vengeance because Sir Terry has carried off the fair Ozelle, whom Otho would have taken to wife. If Sir Terry come not to Aubry's aid, all his lands will be lost and himself put to shame and harm. Therefore do I wander, seeking till I may find Sir Terry."

"Seek no longer, sir knight," said Terry. "I am Aubry's son; and with me is Guy of Warwick, the

flower of all chivalry. Together we will come to my sire and deal with this felon Otho of Pavia."

They lost no time. Before long they had collected five hundred brave knights from Germany, to serve under them, and led them to the strong city of Gurmoise. Outside the city lay Loyer with an army. But Guy and his knights fell upon him so fiercely that they drove him and his men headlong from the siege, and entered the city in triumph.

In a few days came Otho with yet a greater host, and sat down before Gurmoise. Many a fierce fight was there between his men and those in the city. But neither could prevail; and Otho, seeing that it was vain to fight, betook himself to treachery. He won over Loyer with fair words, for Loyer would fain have ended the matter honourably; and Loyer in the end sent an ambassador to Aubry, offering him peace and forgiveness, and bidding him come to a certain place, unarmed, with his chief knights, to make fast their friendship with solemn promises.

Guy put little trust in Loyer's message. Nevertheless the ambassador with skilful speech persuaded him to go with Aubry to the appointed place; and with them went also Terry and Heraud. For a day's space they journeyed from Gurmoise, and came at last to Loyer's camp. The Duke and his knights met them, and gave to each in turn his hand and the kiss of friendship. Then he bade his own men do the like.

"Nay," said Guy, "I will take no kiss of friendship from Otho of Pavia. I will be your friend, lord

Duke; but with this man I make no terms, neither will I take his pledge."

"You are a stern man, Guy," said Otho; "do you never forgive a wrong? See, I am ready to lay aside our enmity."

And he went towards Guy as if to offer him his hand in friendship. But his movement was a signal to his men. In a moment they drew swords which were hidden under their cloaks, and surrounded Aubry and his knights. To Aubry they did no harm. But Heraud and Terry they overcame and bound, and would fain have done the like to Guy. But he, knowing the falseness of Otho's heart, had been wary; and when a certain cousin of Otho caught him by the cloak and would have held him, he wrenched himself away, so that the clasp of the cloak was broken, and it fell from him; and with his empty hand he struck the man so mightily that his neck was broken. Then he sprang aside, and beat off those who would have laid hands on him. He hastened to his horse, which had been left at a little distance when they dismounted to greet Loyer, and leapt into the saddle, Otho's men close upon him. In a moment he was free of them, and galloping off at full speed. They pursued him for a little time, but he pressed his good horse on, and soon left them far behind, so that they gave up the chase and returned home.

Heraud was taken to Lorraine as a prisoner by Loyer, and Terry was cast into a dungeon by Otho. Ozelle, who had come with her lord Terry to the

meeting, was carried to Pavia by force. There Otho bade her make ready to marry him; all her prayers and tears were in vain, save in that she persuaded him to put off their wedding for forty days.

When Guy was free of his pursuers, he slackened his horse's speed, and rode idly at a gentle pace. He had little knowledge of that country, and cared not whither he turned, so great was his wrath at Otho's treachery. As he rode, he was aware of a fair castle on a high rock; and seeing that nightfall was nigh, he rode to it, and besought lodging. The lord of the castle came out to greet him, and lo, it was a certain Sir Amys of the Mountain, who many times had fought on Guy's side in tournaments and wars, and knew well his prowess.

"Sir Guy," said he, "all that I have is yours. Abide here so long as it pleases you, as if you were in your own castle."

He led Guy into his hall, and set him down to feast, and gave him a silken mantle. Then he asked him whither he fared, and Guy told him all that had lately befallen him.

"I will aid you," said Sir Amys. "I have many friends, and can speedily gather a host of knights to fight in your cause, to deliver the lady Ozelle, and Sir Terry, and Sir Heraud. Five hundred will come at my call."

"Nay, that were a work of time," answered Guy. "I give you thanks, Sir Amys; but it would take overlong to gather five hundred knights as you say, and perchance, when we had gathered them, Otho

would slay both Ozelle and Terry before we could come nigh him. What must be done must be done right speedily, and I alone can best do it. Grant me lodging and refreshment for the space of a few days, and certain other things which I will require of you; thus will you lend me greater aid than if you gathered a thousand knights to fight for me."

So Guy rested and was refreshed for eight days. At the end of that time he made ready to go. He stained his skin as though he had been in the East, and dyed his hair a dark colour, and put on new armour given him by Sir Amys, so that no man might recognise him. Then, taking from Sir Amys two horses, one for himself, and one, very swift of foot, for a purpose which he had in mind, he rode alone to Pavia.

He came to Otho's castle, and demanded audience of the Duke, and was shown into his presence.

"Lord Duke," he said, "I would fain take service under you. I have fought in many wars, and will serve you well; and I have brought hither, as a gift, a fleet-footed horse; in all the world there is no beast so swift, no, not a leopard, nor a dromedary, nor a roe."

With that he led in the horse given him by Sir Amys.

"It is a good beast," said Otho, when he saw it. "I need such a one to catch a certain enemy of mine, one Guy. I thank you for this gift. What shall I give you in turn?"

"Sir, I ask but a little boon," answered Guy. "Have you not a prisoner named Sir Terry?"

"It is so," said Otho. "He is my enemy; and in a little time I shall wed his lady, Ozelle the fair."

"This Terry, lord Duke, formerly did me a great wrong," said Guy. "I pray you let me slay him."

This he said, knowing full well that Otho would rather keep Terry in misery and durance than slay him outright.

"Nay," answered Otho, "he shall not be slain. But he shall be so kept that death will seem a pleasant thing to him."

"Let me guard him, then, lord Duke," said Guy. "If I be his jailer, he shall truly long for death rather than life in my power. And I would that I could lay hands on this Guy also, your enemy of whom you have spoken, for he aided Terry against me."

"You shall guard Terry," said Otho, "and I vow that if this Guy comes into my hands, you shall be near him, since you know him so well."

Guy was shown Terry's dungeon. It was a deep pit, full forty fathoms beneath the castle, with but one entrance to it. Only a Lombard guarded the entrance, and Guy was given authority over him.

Guy soon set to work. He sent the Lombard away on some message, and went into the dungeon. Terry, loaded with chains, lay in a dark corner, half-starved, and ill-kempt.

"Terry," said Guy in a low voice.

"Who is that?" said Terry. "Is it Otho come to jeer at me again?"

"It is I, your brother-in-arms, Guy of Warwick,' answered Guy.

"Guy, you shall be hanged," said a voice from behind. "I heard what you said; I go to Otho straightway."

Guy looked round. In the doorway, which he had left open, stood the Lombard. He had never gone on his errand, for he suspected the new jailer, and had followed him secretly to the dungeon. Even as Guy turned, the man fled in haste.

"We are lost," said Terry. "Alas that I ever brought you into my quarrels."

"Nay, I too have a quarrel against Otho," answered Guy. "I will save you yet."

He turned and ran after the Lombard. The man had got a start, and Guy did not easily come up with him. After him he flew, up stairs and along corridors to the hall of Otho's castle, where the Duke sat at meat. As he ran, Guy caught up a staff which he saw lying by a door; and at the very edge of the Duke's daïs he raised the staff, and smote down upon the Lombard so mightily that the man fell dead at Otho's feet.

"What is this?" cried the Duke, starting up. "Why have you slain my servant?"

Guy knew that his secret was safe now, and he answered with a bold front.

"The man was a traitor, lord Duke," he said. "He would fain have taken food to Sir Terry; and when I turned upon him for it, he fled hither. You are well rid of so false a knave."

"He would have given food to my prisoner!" said Otho. "I bade him feed Terry but once a day, and

that sparingly. The man did evil; you have slain him justly, friend. I see that you know how to guard Terry as I wish. See that you treat Guy as you treat Terry, if ever he falls into my hands."

Guy went from Otho's presence and returned to Terry. He freed him from his bonds, and brought him food and wine. But he bade him abide in his prison till all was ready. Then he sought secret audience of the fair Ozelle, and revealed to her who he was.

"I will save both you and Terry, lady," he said. "Thus and thus must you do. You must tell this false Otho that you are ready to wed him now, before the forty days you besought of him are ended. On the wedding-day, when you ride in state with him to be married, look for me, and be prepared to flee."

He left her, and for many days, while the preparations for the wedding were being made, occupied himself with caring for Terry, and bringing back to him the health and strength which he had lost in prison. He sent also certain messages to Sir Amys, that he might help him in his plan.

The night before the wedding-day, Guy set Terry free, and led him secretly to the city walls. There he had a ladder ready. Terry climbed over and let himself down on the other side. A squire on horseback was waiting, with another horse for Terry. Terry mounted, and before long was on his way to Sir Amys, a free man once more.

Guy knew that Otho would not seek to see Terry that night or on the wedding-morn; the escape would not be known till Guy himself and Ozelle were free;

and he went to sleep that night with a glad heart, joyful at having saved his friend, and sure of vengeance on Otho on the morrow.

The wedding-day dawned. All Otho's barons and knights had come to Pavia to do him honour; and they set out for the church in a great procession, Otho riding in the midst, Ozelle at his side on a fair steed.

Suddenly there came riding among them the Duke's new jailer, fully armed, with a drawn sword in his hand. Right fiercely he spoke.

"Stand, Duke Otho," he cried. "There is no wedding for you to-day, save only with my sword. Your time is come. I am Guy, whom you have betrayed many times, whose friends you use despitefully, whose body you would fain shut up in your dungeon. Shall I treat Guy even as I treated Terry? Terry is free, loosed from bonds by my own hand. I too am free, and thus I use my freedom!"

With that he swung his sword high in the air. Down, down it fell, and shore Otho's head in twain to the very shoulders. Then, before any man could stop him, Guy seized Ozelle's steed by the rein with one hand, and cleaving a path with his sword with the other, set the two horses at a gallop. Only one man tried to bar his way, Berard, Otho's cousin; and him Guy struck down and sorely wounded. The rest were too dazed to pursue till it was too late, and Guy bore Ozelle away in safety to Terry, who was awaiting her at the castle of Sir Amys, where they were wedded happily.

After the wedding Guy and Terry began to summon men to attack Loyer, Duke of Lorraine, whose prisoner Heraud was. But Loyer, when he heard that Otho was dead, and heard of their plan, repented of his treachery, and freed Sir Heraud without more ado. He made his peace also with Sir Terry, and restored to him all his honours and possessions.

And now Guy was full weary of fighting. There was no adventure in all Europe that could bring him more fame than he had already. He was the chief knight of Christendom, the flower of chivalry; and he knew that Felice would ask no more of him. He longed to see her, and to be at home in England again; and at last he set out. Through all France he passed, and into Brittany, where he slew a monstrous boar, and thence into England.

When he landed, he hastened first of all to York to greet King Athelstan; and Athelstan received him with great honour, and feasted him for many days. Yet one more adventure befell him before he returned to Felice. As he sat with the King one day, there came in haste four messengers from Northumberland, and cast themselves at the King's feet.

"Sire," cried the chief of them, "we pray you to come to aid us. We are in sore straits. A great dragon has come into our country. It has journeyed from Ireland, doing havoc wherever it has passed. It is shaggy and grim to look on, black as a coal, swift as a war-horse, with paws like a lion's. So hard is its hide that no man of us can pierce it. All that it touches it slays. None of us can prevail

against it, for it has wings to fly withal, and cannot be harmed. Never was so terrible a beast. Send us some doughty knight, we pray you, sire, for else this dragon will eat all our country up."

"Sire, I will do battle with this dragon," cried Guy. "God forbid that so many folk should come to harm and sorrow by reason of this one beast. I will combat it. It is a worthy adventure for a bold knight."

"Go, then, Guy. I bid you God-speed," said Athelstan.

Guy returned with the men of Northumberland, and they led him to the dragon's lair. They had spoken truly of the beast—never was so grim a monster. But Guy had no fear of it. He thrust fiercely at it with his spear, and struck it in the side. It was even as the messengers had said; the spear broke in his hands, without piercing the thick hide. Guy drew his sword, and showered blows on the creature as it sprang upon him. But for all the harm he wrought, he might have been beating the air.

The dragon grew enraged at Guy's blows. It roared loudly, and lashed its tail with so wide a sweep that it struck Guy, and broke three of his ribs. But the movement gave Guy an opening. He thrust with his sword by the beast's leg, where the hide was thin and tender. The blade bit deep, and as the dragon turned and roared in pain, Guy thrust again and again, leaping to and fro to find some softer spot. The beast became weaker and weaker with its wounds, and at last a great blow under the wing slew it altogether.

Thereafter the men of Northumberland would fain

have kept Guy among them, and held feasts in his honour. But he put them aside, and, in spite of his wounds, journeyed with all speed to Warwick. He found that his father and mother had died while he was warring in Europe. But Earl Rohaud still lived, and Guy went to him and told him all his adventures, begging leave to take Felice to wife, if she would consent. Rohaud could not say nay to the bravest knight in all Christendom, and soon Guy was with his dear lady.

Guy's fame was spread far among all men, and Felice knew now that there was not his peer among Christian knights. When he asked her hand she gave it him with all love and gladness; and in a little time they were married, with such splendour and rejoicing as was never before seen in Warwick.

V. The Wandering Palmer

For a little time Guy lived in great joy and happiness with Felice. She bore him a son, to whom the name Raynburn was given; later, when the boy grew of an age to learn knightly ways, he was put under Sir Heraud, who, in his old age, taught him the arts of war, even as long ago he had taught Guy. Guy himself could not teach him, for he was once more a wanderer; and it was in this wise that he came again to leave England.

On a bright starry night Guy was riding homewards from the chase. He had had good hunting, and was

well content in heart. But as he looked up, and saw the sky thick with stars, his thoughts were changed within him.

"What is this?" he said to himself. "Do I take pride in hunting the deer and the boar? It is an idle, profitless life that I lead. Neither ease now nor glory hard-won aforetime avails me at all: my soul is dead within me. I have done hurt to many men; many have I slain, and many a land burned and destroyed with war, and all for the love of Felice. No glory have I won for God: nothing noble have I sought save fame for my lady's sake."

He rode home sad and sorrowful. Felice saw his grief, and asked the cause; and he told her his thoughts.

"Dear wife, I must leave you," he said. "All my days henceforth will I give to God, in repentance for my heedless life. I will go hence and wander in pilgrimage to many lands, ending my life in humility and peace."

Felice wept bitterly. Long and eagerly did she seek to turn him from his purpose. But his mind was set. Her words were vain. He garbed himself as a palmer, taking neither sword nor armour, nor any possession save a gold ring which Felice gave him in remembrance of her; and so he left England once again, and turned his face to go towards the Holy Land.

He wandered through many countries, visiting holy places and doing all things as beseemed a humble pilgrim. At last he came to Jerusalem; and when he had paid his vows there, he set out to go to Antioch.

It chanced that one day he rested by a wayside well. As he sat there, a pilgrim came by, a man tall and well-built, and, by his mien, of high lineage; but great sorrow was in his face.

"Greeting, friend," said Guy. "Whither do you go? You bear a sad look, as of one in great grief."

"Truly I am in great grief," answered the stranger. "I am seeking one or other of two valiant knights to do me a service; they are Sir Guy and Sir Heraud. But I have wandered in every land, and I do not think they are to be found anywhere upon earth."

"What is your need of them?" asked Guy. "Perchance even a humble pilgrim, as I am, may be able to help you."

"I trow not," answered the other. "But you shall hear my story. Know that I am Earl Jonas, a Christian knight, who, with my fifteen sons, formerly made war on the heathen Saracens. In a fight against one Triamour, a king among the Saracens, we gained the victory; but we pursued Triamour rashly, and went too far, and were every one of us captured, and became Triamour's servants. Now a little time after this Triamour and his son Fabour were bidden to the court of their overlord, the Sultan of Alexandria; and Fabour, playing chess with the Sultan's son, roused his anger by his skill, so that high words passed between them, and they quarrelled so fiercely that in the end Fabour slew the prince. Great was the Sultan's wrath thereat; and he hardly refrained from putting Triamour and Fabour to death without more ado. But he gave them this respite, that within a

year and a day Fabour, or some champion found by him to take his place, should fight with Amoraunt of Ethiopia, a giant who is in the Sultan's service. This Amoraunt is pitch black, and so mighty that ten ordinary men could not prevail against him. Unless Fabour or his champion kills him, both Fabour and Triamour are to die. When Triamour heard this judgment, he was distraught with grief and fear, knowing that Fabour could not overcome Amoraunt, nor could any but the very stoutest knights in all Europe. He asked me if I knew any Christian knight doughty enough to take up the challenge; and I answered (alas that I did not keep my words unsaid) that Sir Guy or Sir Heraud peradventure might slay the giant. Then Triamour bade me find one or other of them, within the appointed time. If I come back without Guy or Heraud or some champion equally mighty, or through fear do not return at all, my fifteen sons, whom Triamour holds in ward, will every one of them be put to death. And now there are but a few days before I must needs return, and I have not found a champion. Woe is me: I and all my sons are as good as slain."

"Long ago," said Guy, "before I put on these pilgrim's weeds, I was a doughty man of war in my own land. I will take up this battle, and slay Amoraunt, and save you and your sons."

Guy had indeed given up wars and fighting; but he thought that if he could slay the heathen Saracen, it would be a good deed, and would save the lives of the Christian prisoners of Triamour.

Jonas looked askance at his words. He knew not that he was speaking to Guy himself, and thought that this pilgrim, though plainly he was a stout warrior, could by no means be the equal of the great knights whom he sought so vainly to find. Nevertheless, seeing that he had as yet found no man at all to fight for him, he thanked Guy, and took him as Fabour's champion. Together they journeyed to the Sultan's court, and on the appointed day Guy, clad in rich armour given him by Triamour, stood forth to do battle with the giant in a field where the lists were set.

Amoraunt was a grim figure of a man, black and lowering in mien, and as large in bulk as two ordinary men. "He is a fiend, and no man," said Guy, when he saw him. "Nevertheless I will lay him low."

They came together first with lances; but the lances were shivered in a moment. Then they fell to with swords. Before long Guy's armour was cleft and hacked in a thousand places, for Amoraunt had an enchanted sword, which no armour could withstand. So fiercely did he fight that he beat Guy to his knees: no man yet in all the world had done so much. Yet Guy fought on, and in his turn pressed the giant hard. All the morning they strove with one another, yet neither prevailed.

It drew towards noon, and Amoraunt grew thirsty with the heat and long fight.

"I pray you let me drink at yonder river," he cried to Guy; for a river ran alongside the meadow where they fought. "If I drink not, I shall die of thirst.

You would not have me slain thus when your own might cannot prevail to take my life."

"I grant it," answered Guy; "see that you do but drink, and not rest longer than is needful to check your thirst."

Amoraunt drank and was refreshed. Then he fell upon Guy so mightily that Guy in turn grew faint with thirst.

"Yield you, Christian dog," cried the giant, when he saw Guy's plight.

"Never," said Guy. "I pray you let me drink even as I let you."

"Nay," answered Amoraunt. "Why should I let you drink? You are my enemy. I know not even who you are, nor what your name may be. If you will tell me your name, perchance I may find that you are a worthy foe, to be met with all courtesy: then will I let you drink."

"I am Guy of Warwick," said Guy.

"Guy of Warwick!" cried Amoraunt. "No mercy shall you have at my hands; I would not let Guy of Warwick drink so much as one drop, no, not for all the riches in this land. I will slay you, and mine will be the greatest victory ever won by man."

With that he attacked furiously. Guy's heart sank within him, for he knew that he was weary, while Amoraunt was refreshed. But he did not give up hope. He sought a cunning means to gain rest. Step by step, little by little, he yielded ground, defending himself stoutly, until he drew near the river. Then suddenly he turned and dived in.

Amoraunt stood on the bank waiting for him to come to land again, unless first the weight of his armour should be too great for him to keep above water. But Guy swam easily, and the cool water gave him new strength. As Amoraunt watched, he suddenly dived and swam swiftly beneath the surface, and before the giant could discover where he was, came to land at a little distance. Then he rushed upon his enemy and began the fray again more furiously than ever.

But now Amoraunt began to lose heart, seeing that Guy had outwitted him and won fresh courage and strength. Weaker and weaker grew his blows; hardly could he raise the sword to smite, so weary were his arms; and at last Guy with one blow shore off his right arm, and with the next struck his evil head clean from his body.

At that a great shout went up from all those who looked on. The Sultan's men would fain have set upon Guy, to avenge their champion; but the Sultan forbade them, knowing that the fight had been fairly won by the Christian knight. Triamour and Fabour and Earl Jonas ran to Guy, and fell at his feet, crying out blessings upon him, and giving him unceasing thanks for saving their lives. But Guy would not pay heed to their words. He put them aside graciously, and when he had eaten and drunk and rested, robed himself again in his palmer's weeds, and set out to wander over Europe once more.

In this guise he roamed into many lands, doing good deeds of kindness wherever he might, and praying unceasingly in penitence for the days when he went

a-warring idly for his own and Felice's glory. He travelled again to Jerusalem, and then to Constantinople; thereafter he went through Hungary, and so at last came into Germany.

It chanced that one day as he walked he was aware of another pilgrim by the wayside, who made moan and sorry cheer. "Alas, alas," he cried, "would that I might die! To-day I am disgraced: why have I lived so long?"

Guy started when he heard the pilgrim's voice. He looked upon him steadily; it was his friend and brother-in-arms, Sir Terry of Gurmoise. But Guy himself was much changed by his long wanderings, and Terry did not recognise him.

"What ails you, friend?" asked Guy.

Sir Terry looked at him narrowly, for he knew his voice; but he did not recognise Guy.

"I am in sore straits," he answered. "I am he who was formerly known to all men as Sir Terry of Gurmoise. I seek Guy of Warwick, my comrade and brother-in-arms of old. If I do not find him all my goods will be taken from me and I shall be cast into prison."

"What is your need of Guy of Warwick?" asked Guy.

"This is my need," answered Terry. "Berard, the kinsman of Otho of Pavia, whom Guy slew long ago, has ever been my bitter foe. Long has he sought to do me ill, and at last won his end by bringing a false charge against me before our lord the Emperor of Germany, whose vassal we both are.

The Emperor put faith in him. But I challenged Berard to fight, to prove his words; and he was willing, and we fixed a certain day for the fight. But when the Emperor bade me give pledges that I would come forward on that day, no man would stand by me and give his word for me, for Berard has grown powerful and all men feared him. Therefore, since I could give no pledge, my challenge is vain and empty, and all my goods are forfeit. But the Emperor gave me this grace, that I might seek Sir Guy, and bring him on the appointed day as my champion. Long and far have I sought, but have found him not. No man knows where Guy is: it is said that he is wandering alone as a pilgrim, even as you are, fair sir; but I can hear no tidings of him. I trow he is dead; if he be, I have lost the truest friend and the best knight that ever lived. But whether he lives or is dead, I cannot find him, and to-morrow shall be cast into misery and disgrace; I am all undone."

Guy made up his mind, as he heard this tale, to aid his friend. But he did not wish to reveal himself, for if he did, he would have to fight in his own name as Terry's champion.

"Heaven will aid you, Sir Terry," he said. "Comfort yourself. See, you are weak and faint with grief and hunger. Rest here by my side, and I will guard you while you sleep. You will gain new strength and hope thereby."

"I thank you, friend," said Sir Terry. "I will rest: I am indeed very weary."

He lay down to sleep beside Guy, and Guy sat by

him and watched him as he slept. As he watched, he seemed to see a strange thing. A shape as of a white weasel issued from Terry's mouth, silently and with a quick running step. It halted on the ground beside him, looked round, and darted suddenly towards an ancient rock hard by. Up the face of the rock it ran swiftly, and disappeared into a cleft.

Guy looked at it in wonder, and when it vanished he was lost in marvel at what he had seen. Suddenly, as he gazed at the rock, the white shape appeared again, and running as swiftly as before, entered once more into Terry's mouth, and disappeared.

A moment afterwards Terry awoke. "I have slept well," he said; "yet I dreamed very strangely. I thought I saw before me a wondrous treasure, and by it lay a fair bright sword, such as a knight might take joy in using. Thereafter my dream changed, and I seemed to be in some deadly peril, from which you delivered me."

"I can interpret your dream," said Guy, when he had thought upon Terry's words and the strange sight he had seen. "First, you shall come into your own again, and Berard's slander shall not harm you. Secondly, it is through me that this shall come to pass. Lastly, I cannot tell what the vision of the sword may mean, unless it be this."

With that he rose and strode to the rock into which the white weasel had disappeared. He peered into the cleft. There, as he hoped, he saw something shining. He put his hand in and grasped it. It was the hilt of a great sword.

He pulled the sword out. It was long and well-

tempered and of the finest steel. "It is a goodly brand," he said to Terry. "With this sword I deem that your enemy shall be overcome; it is a sign from Heaven. Take it, and when I require it of you again, give it to me. Now go: refresh yourself well, and return to the Emperor's court. Fear not: help will come to you against Berard, and you will be saved from disgrace."

Terry knew not what Guy meant, nor that it was Guy himself who spoke. Nevertheless he obeyed, for there was nought else to do.

When Terry had gone, Guy himself hastened to the Emperor's palace, and when he had come thither, asked charity, as all pilgrims were wont to do. Meat and drink were willingly set before him, and the men of the court crowded round him to ask him what tidings he bore, for by his pilgrim's dress they saw that he had fared through many lands: and Guy gave them free and courteous answer. At last the Emperor himself spake to him.

"Pilgrim, you have journeyed through my realm," he said, wishing to hear some praise of himself; "what do men say of me? Am I a good ruler, think you?"

"Sir," answered Guy, "I know not if your rule be always good and just. But in one thing men say often that you are unjust, in that you have listened to Sir Berard and cast down Sir Terry, a valiant knight whom all men love and honour."

"Say you so, base knave?" roared the Emperor, in great wrath. "I rule unjustly? I wrong Sir Terry? You shall rue that word!"

"So be it, sire," answered Guy courteously. "Yet I speak truth, and I will uphold it with my life."

He drew off his glove and cast it down before the Emperor. "There is my challenge, Sir Emperor," he cried. "This man Berard is a false caitiff, and has wronged Sir Terry foully: and that I will do him to wit by force of arms whensoever it may please you. Here will I abide till he takes up my glove."

Sir Berard was present, and came forward. "You are overbold, pilgrim," he said. "How do I know that you are not some base-born rascal with whom no noble knight may fight?"

"There is my glove, Sir Berard," answered Guy. "Take it up, or by my faith and my honour, I will strike you dead here with my open hand. I say you are a caitiff and false, and I will prove it with my sword upon your body."

"Sir Berard, this is the day when Sir Terry's brother Sir Guy should have met you in arms," said the Emperor. "Sir Terry has come back bootless from his quest. Will you take this man in Sir Guy's stead, and fight him in proof of your charge against Sir Terry?"

"That will I gladly," said Sir Berard, who was no coward, for all his baseness. "Go arm you, pilgrim," he added, turning to Guy with contempt: "soon shall your pilgrimage upon earth come to an end."

Guy straightway sought out Sir Terry, and told him what had befallen; but he revealed not his own name. Sir Terry gave him armour, and the sword which had been drawn from the rock; and Sir Guy went back

to the Emperor to do battle with Sir Berard. The lists were set in a courtyard of the palace.

Long and bitterly did they fight. All that afternoon they strove with one another. Sir Berard was as stout a warrior as ever Guy had met, and he could not break down his guard. Evening fell, and they had not made an end; and the Emperor bade them cease, and fight again on the morrow. Sir Guy he caused to be lodged in the palace.

But Berard knew that in the end he could not prevail against the strange knight. He cast about in his mind to escape from fighting on the next day, and soon he found a way. That night, when all men were asleep, his servants entered the palace secretly, and came by stealth to Guy's chamber. Guy lay in a deep sleep, worn out with his efforts. Berard's men lifted up his mattress; he neither woke nor stirred, so sound was his slumber. Then they carried him, mattress and all, and cast him into the sea. But the mattress was light, and floated, and bore him away before they could do him a worse mischief.

Presently the swell of the waves woke Guy. He opened his eyes. "What is this?" he said to himself. "I see the stars and the moon above me."

He put his hand over the edge of the mattress. It touched the water. "Where am I?" said Guy, sitting up and looking round. Nought could he see but sky and stars and sea.

"Alas, I am betrayed," he thought. "Now will Berard triumph over Sir Terry. Why did I not watch against treachery?"

But when he had lamented a little, he fell to praying for help in his sore straits; and his prayer was answered. About dawn he saw a fisherman in his boat at a little distance. He called to him, and when the man came, he told him all, and bade him row to land, promising him great rewards in Sir Terry's name.

The man obeyed, for the fame of the fight had reached him. Guy came to land safely, and hastened to the Emperor's palace.

"Justice, sire," he cried, when he came into the Emperor's presence. "Berard has betrayed me." And he told what had happened.

The Emperor's brow grew dark as he listened. "You spoke truth," he said at the end. "Berard is a caitiff. He shall die. But I ween that you would take joy in fighting him; and I think you will overcome him."

"Gladly will I fight him again," answered Guy. "By God's help I will lay him low."

"So be it," said the Emperor. "You shall fight again."

Anon came Sir Berard to the courtyard, hoping to find that his enemy had not appeared. Great was his surprise and dismay when he saw Sir Guy waiting for him, a grim smile on his lips. Nevertheless, he put a bold front on it, and fell to with might and main. But Guy was wroth, and anger lent him new strength, while Berard, since his plots had failed, lost courage. Before long Guy beat down his guard, and clove his head, helmet and all, to the shoulders; and Berard fell dead at his feet.

"I have upheld Sir Terry's honour," cried Guy. "Now will I reveal myself, Sir Emperor. I am Guy of Warwick."

At that name no man wondered at Berard's fall. They would fain have feasted Sir Guy, or kept him at the Emperor's court; and Sir Terry begged him to abide with him for a space. But Sir Guy would take no honours from them, nor would he remain in Germany.

"I am a pilgrim," he said. "Many journeys have I made to atone for my former vain-glory. Twice have I fought since I wore these weeds, once for Earl Jonas and once for my dear brother-in-arms, Sir Terry; and each was a just fight. But I will not take up again my old life of jousting and feasting and fighting. I will don my pilgrim's weeds, and fare forth again; I grow old, and would fain look upon my country and my lady before my time comes to die. I bid you fare well, live justly, and do good deeds: I go to my own land to end my days."

With that he went from them, and donned his pilgrim's garb again, and set out for England, where, after many days, he arrived without adventure.

VI. The Last Fight

The Danes had come to England in great force, and overrun the land. Athelstan the King could do nought against them. Anlaf, King of Denmark, pressed him sorely, and drove him into Winchester

and besieged him there; nor would he raise the siege, he proclaimed, until an English champion was found to meet a warrior named Colbrand, the strongest man in all the Danish army.

Athelstan was grievously troubled in soul. He could see no help coming to him from any man, and he prayed earnestly to Heaven for aid. An answer to his prayer was revealed to him in a vision. He dreamed that an angel came to him and gave him counsel. "Go straightway to the north gate of your castle," the angel said. "There you will see one clad in pilgrim's weeds. Take him for your champion. He will deliver you from the Danes."

The angel vanished, and Athelstan woke. It was morn. When he had risen, he went with all speed to the north gate of his castle. Even as he came to the gate, there entered in one clad in pilgrim's weeds.

"The angel spoke truth," thought Athelstan. "Stranger," he said to the pilgrim, falling on his knees before him, "I crave a boon of you. I have been warned in a dream that you shall deliver England from the Danes who so grievously oppress us. I pray you be my champion against them, and fight Colbrand their great warrior."

"Pray not to me, sire," said Guy, for it was he. "I am an old man, of feeble body. My strength is gone from me."

But Athelstan did not cease to pray to him, and at last Guy had pity. "For the sake of England I will take this battle on me," he said.

Then was the King glad and blithe, and thanked Guy

a thousand times. Straightway he sent a messenger to Anlaf, saying that he had found a man who would fight for England against Colbrand; and a certain day was fixed for the battle.

The Danes made ready for the fray. Colbrand prepared his chain-mail and whetted his sword. So mighty was he in bulk that no horse could carry him. Fierce and terrible was his mien, and his armour was black as pitch. There was no man like him in all the world.

The day came, and Anlaf and Athelstan rode to the appointed place and plighted their word one to another. If Colbrand won, then Anlaf should possess England and rule it altogether; but if the English champion won, then Anlaf and the Danes should go back straightway to their own country, and never more come to England again.

Thus they agreed; and Colbrand came into the lists on one side and Guy on the other. Guy was armed in a good hawberk of fine steel, and a helmet stoutly wrought, with a band of gold on it, set with bright shining precious stones. As he entered the lists he fell on his knees and prayed to God to give him the victory over his country's enemy. But when he saw Colbrand his heart sank—never had he met a man who looked so grim and mighty.

They chose whatever arms they pleased. Guy rode on horseback, but Colbrand met him boldly on foot, and cast at him three javelins. Two went astray, but the third pierced Guy's shield, and passed clean through it between his arm and his side, grazing his

armour, and stuck in the ground beyond, so fiercely was it thrown. Thereat Guy drove at him with his spear, and smote him on the shield; but Colbrand held firm, and the spear broke into five pieces. Then Colbrand swung his sword aloft, and smote downwards at Guy's head; but he missed by a little, and the blade passed between Guy and the saddle-bow, through the saddle, through the very body of the horse itself, cleaving the beast in twain.

The horse fell, and Guy with it, but he started up at once, and drove at Colbrand with his sword. Down came the blow. It missed the Dane's head, but struck him full on the shoulder, and shore off the armour, and pierced the flesh deep; the wound was a handbreadth long. As Colbrand felt the smart of it, he lifted his sword in turn, and struck at Guy: so mighty was the blow that it clave Guy's helmet, and burst the gold circlet; but thereafter it glanced aside, and fell upon Guy's shield. Through the shield it cut, and split it into two pieces, so that it was of no more avail. But Guy struck stoutly back, and smote Colbrand's shield a fierce blow; yet so strong was the shield that the sword did but pierce a little way, and broke short in Guy's hand with the force of the stroke.

And now Guy had lost both sword and shield, and the Danes began to be well pleased. "Now is England vanquished," they said one to another. "England shall be subject to us and be our thrall."

"Yield you, sir knight!" cried Colbrand. "Sword, shield, and steed, they have all gone from you. Yield

and ask mercy: I will not slay you; I will lead you to my lord the King, and he will do with you as he pleases."

Even as he spoke, Guy turned and ran swiftly to the English end of the lists, and seized a great axe. "Have at you!" he cried, as he came running back with it: "your time is come!"

Colbrand struck at him hastily with his sword. But his aim was not true, and the blade missed Guy altogether, and buried itself in the earth a foot and more. As he struck, Guy heaved up his axe, and brought it down on the Dane's shoulder. Through armour it drove, through flesh and bone, and shore off the sword arm, so that it fell to the ground still grasping the sword.

Colbrand snatched at his sword with his left hand. But he was not quick enough. Before he could do aught, Guy smote him on the neck with his axe so mightily that it struck his head clean from his body, and he fell dead upon the ground.

Thereat the English shouted for joy. But Anlaf turned away, sad at heart at Colbrand's defeat, and led his men thence. Straight to the sea they went, and embarked in their ships, and sailed to Denmark; and never more were they seen in England.

Long and merrily did the English rejoice. They took Guy in triumph to Winchester, and would fain have given him great honour and rewards, but Guy refused everything; he would not even tell his name to Athelstan until the King promised not to reveal it to any man for the space of a twelvemonth. Then

"'Dear lady, my hour is come,' Guy said to her"

Guy told him and bade him farewell, and journeyed to Warwick, wearing once more his old pilgrim's garb.

Earl Rohaud was long dead, and Felice ruled Warwick in his stead. All through the long years she had been faithful to Guy. Every day she prayed for his safety, and did acts of charity in remembrance of him. Thirteen poor men she fed each day, and did many another good deed.

Guy came to Warwick all unknown. He entered the castle as a humble pilgrim, and sought arms; and Felice herself ministered to him. When he saw her gentleness and charity, Guy's heart was filled with love and gladness.

"It is well that I went away," he thought to himself. "My lady, who was so proud, is become the very flower of love and humility. While I have done penance in my long wanderings, she has turned to good works and charity. So be it: thus will we end our days, continuing good works always. Felice without doubt does not hope to look upon me again, and I have done too much evil and wrong in my life to come into peace and happiness in the days that are yet left to me. I will go hence, and not show myself to her."

He left the castle, and made his way to a great cliff near by, known to this day as Guy's Cliff. There in a cave he lived a hermit's life, fishing often, and praying to God to forgive him his heedless fighting and slaying; while Felice in Warwick continued in good deeds and charity, so that no one of that day was her equal in gentleness.

So Guy abode for many days. But at last the archangel Michael appeared to him in a dream, and bade him prepare for death. Then Guy called a little peasant boy whom he saw near his cave, and sent him to Felice with the gold ring she had given him when first he set out as a pilgrim.

"Where did you get this ring?" asked Felice, when the boy gave it to her.

"A hermit who dwells in the cave on the cliff gave it to me, lady, and bade me bring it to you," he answered.

"Lead me to him," said Felice.

The boy led her to the cave, where Guy lay dying.

"Dear lady, my hour is come," he said to her, as she bent over him. "Farewell." And he kissed her with love and courtesy, and fell back on his couch and died.

They buried him with pomp and splendour. But Felice could not be consoled. For fifteen days she mourned as if her heart would break, and then she also died, and was buried in the same grave as her lord.

Raynburn, their son, ruled Warwick after them. Many great deeds did he do, both in England and against the Saracens. Much fame was his. But the fame of no English knight, not even of Guy's own son, was so high and glorious as that of Guy of Warwick.

The Ash and the Hazel

IN former days there lived in the the West Country two knights, bold and free, and of substance. All their lives there was close friendship between them, and when, about the same time, they each married a lady fair, this friendship did not cease: they agreed that if ever one of them had sons or daughters, the other should stand godfather to them.

In due time one of the fair ladies bore two fine twin boys. Immediately the father sent a messenger to his friend, commanding him to "go and greet him, and bid him come to me."

The messenger went, and arrived at the other knight's castle just as men were sitting at meat. He greeted the lord and lady of the place and all their company, on bended knee.

"My lord," he cried, "I am bidden to tell you to come to my lord, to stand godfather according to your promise."

"A godfather!" cried the knight. "That is good hearing. Has your lord a son or a daughter?"

"Two sons, sir, God save them," answered the messenger.

The knight was full glad at those tidings, and gave thanks to Heaven for his friend's happiness. Then he bade the messenger say that he would come speedily; and he gave him for himself a palfrey, because of the good news he had brought.

But the lady of that castle was unlike her lord in goodness and friendship. She was proud and envious, full of bitterness and evil-speaking: nothing she loved better than to speak against the fair fame of others; and now, since she had as yet no children of her own, she was filled with jealousy and hatred.

"I wonder, messenger," she said harshly, ere the man left the knight's hall, "that you dare to bring such tidings. Who is the man that counselled your lord to tell such a tale? A sorry counseller, in truth! The lady hath not borne twin sons: one is a poor woman's son, that she hath bought and put with her own, the better to please her lord."

"Wife, what is this?" cried her husband in great wrath. "Cease your evil-speaking, or I will have that wicked tongue cut out and silenced for ever. Would you do dishonour to my friend's fair name? Go now from this hall, and repent in your own chamber!"

The lady went thence with proud and haughty mien, while her lord strove to make amends to the messenger and all the company for her cruel words. They knew her envious nature, and did not believe the slander she had uttered; and in their hearts they prayed that if ever she bore a child, some misfortune might light upon her, to make her repent of her wickedness.

Before long it befell that she herself bore children, twin daughters; and at once her former jealous words came to her mind. "Alas!" she cried, "I have spoken to my own hurt. I said evil things of my neighbour, and my cruel words have fallen on my own head. Men will say of my two daughters that which I said of my neighbour's two sons. I must slay one of my own children, and make it seem as though I have borne but one, or I am for ever disgraced."

She told those of her maids who knew of the birth of her children what she meant to do. But they were aghast at her plan, and tried to turn her from it. In vain did they beseech her, in vain did they rail at her cruelty; she was resolved to slay one of her daughters before it became known to all men that she had borne two.

At last one of her maids found a device to prevent such a terrible deed. "Weep no more, my lady," she said. "I will help you, so that you need not slay this innocent child. Give the child to me; I will take her to a certain place several miles from here, where there is an abbey; and I will lay the child where the good folk of the abbey will find her. They will surely care for her and bring her up. So will you be rid of this daughter, and yet do her no harm."

"It is well said," replied the lady. "I give you thanks. But before I send my child away, I will contrive that whosoever finds her shall know that she is born of noble parents."

She took a long rich mantle that her lord had

brought her from Constantinople, and wrapped the little maiden therein; on her arm she tied a lace of plaited silk, whereto was fastened a ring of fine gold.

When all was ready, the maid took the little babe, and stole away from the castle at eventide. She passed over a wild heath, and journeyed through field and wood all the long winter night. The weather was clear and cold, the moon shone bright; but ere long she grew weary and sat down to rest till it was morn.

At last day drew nigh, and she heard cocks crowing and dogs barking. She went towards the sound, and right soon saw walls and windows before her; it was the abbey which she sought.

She went to the abbey door, and sank down on her knees and prayed, weeping: "O Lord Christ, who hearest sinful men's prayers, receive this gift; help this innocent child, that she may be christened and honourably brought up!"

As she ended she looked up, and saw beside her and above her an ash tree, fair and high, of great and ancient growth, with many a spreading branch. The trunk of it was hollow; and she laid the child therein, wrapped in the mantle.

The sun's light shot up. The birds began singing in the trees. Ploughmen came from within the abbey walls and went to their work. The maid blessed the child, and turned and took her way home again.

Anon came out the porter of the abbey, busied about his daily tasks. Before long he saw a corner of the rich mantle peeping out of the hollow of the ash-tree.

"She went to the abbey door, and sank down on her knees."

"What is this?" he said to himself. "It must be some treasure. Perchance thieves have broken into a rich house, and left their booty hidden here for a time."

He went to the tree, and pulled out the mantle, and, wrapped in it, the little babe. Home to his house he took the child straightway, and warmed it, for it was nigh dead with cold. Then he went to the lady abbess and told her of what he had found.

"Go in haste," said the abbess, "and bring the child hither. She is welcome to God and to this abbey. I will help her as much as I can, as if she were my own kinswoman."

The porter brought the babe, and the lady abbess took charge of her. Anon she was christened, and they gave her the name Le Fraine, which is to say, "The Ash," because of the tree in which she was found.

Le Fraine throve from year to year; the abbess herself taught her all things, and called her her dear niece. By the time she had grown up, there was no fairer maiden in all England. In due season the abbess told her how she was found, and gave her the mantle and the ring, to keep for herself, if ever she needed to prove her noble birth; and she abode at the abbey in peace and happiness.

There was in that country a rich knight, proud, and young, and jolly; and as yet he had no wife. He was a doughty knight, of great renown, and his name was Sir Gurun. He heard the praises of Le Fraine sounded by those who had been guests at the

abbey (for all who came were made welcome there; it was a place of great riches and plenty), and he vowed that he would see this fair maiden for himself.

He rode to the abbey gaily dressed, and asked hospitality; and it was granted him readily. The abbess and her ladies greeted him, and Le Fraine also did him all courtesy. So fair did she seem to him that he fell in love with her at once; and Le Fraine in her turn was enchanted by his comeliness and grace. Daily he came to the abbey to see her, and at every visit they loved one another more; and at length, knowing that he might not publicly marry one whose birth was unknown, however fair she might be, he persuaded her to come to him secretly, and be wedded to him in his castle.

The good abbess wept and moaned when she found her dear charge was gone, but all in vain. Le Fraine had left her, and could not be brought back. She was wedded to Sir Gurun, and lived quietly and in all happiness with him at his castle, beloved by him and by rich and poor alike.

But they had not lived long thus ere Sir Gurun's vassals came to him, and begged him to put Le Fraine away from him; in spite of her goodness and beauty, they said, she was but a foundling, and no man knew who her parents might be. If she had a son, men would be loath to serve him, for he would not be nobly born on his mother's side. They besought Sir Gurun to take for wife the daughter of a knight who dwelt near: she was fair and bright, they said, and would be a seemly mate for him.

Loath was Sir Gurun to listen to such counsel; but his vassals pressed him sore, and ere long he yielded and made a covenant with his neighbour to wed his daughter; and anon, with much sorrow, he told Le Fraine of his purpose, and bade her make all things in his castle ready for the new bride.

The maiden whom Sir Gurun was fain to wed was called Le Codre, which is to say, "The Hazel," for her eyes were as brown as a hazel-nut. All men esteemed hazel more highly than ash; and when they learnt the new bride's name, they thought little of poor Le Fraine But she, though her heart was well-nigh broken, went about her duties with a smiling face; never a word of pride or complaint did she let fall from her lips, so that at the great wedding-feast, when all made merry with glee and high jollity, Le Codre herself noted her humble and gracious mien, and loved her well.

Presently, deeming it right to see that all things were meetly ordered, Le Fraine went into the bridal chamber. She found the bed but poorly set, with no fair covering upon it; and for love of her dear lord, whose honour she would by no means bring low through any blemish in his household goods, she spread upon the bed the rich mantle wherein she had been wrapped long ago by her mother. Then she left the chamber.

Scarce had she gone from the bridal chamber when Le Codre and her mother entered it. The mother looked upon the bed, and saw the mantle. She started back, and trembled.

"Dear mother, what ails you?" asked Le Codre.

"What mantle is this? Send me Sir Gurun's chamberlain. I must know whence this mantle came."

The chamberlain was summoned, but he had never yet seen the mantle, and could not tell whose it might be. Then they fetched Le Fraine, and asked her if she knew ought of it.

"Yea, I know this mantle," she said, with glad cheer; "it is mine. I have long had it, with this ring."

Le Codre's mother looked stedfastly upon her, and upon the ring and the mantle, and then again upon Le Fraine. "Child," she said at length, "you are my daughter."

It was indeed Le Fraine's mother, who formerly had sent her child out into the world, to be rid of her.

When Sir Gurun heard all the story, he was filled with joy. "Now will I wed again my dear and true wife," he said; and he took Le Fraine into his arms before them all.

So Gurun and Le Fraine came together once more and lived many years happily. Le Codre ere long was wedded to another knight of that country, with whom she too dwelt in all happiness to her life's end: and thus ends the story of the twin sisters bright, the Ash and the Hazel.

Floris and Blanchefleur

I. Blanchefleur is Sold

For many years Prince Perse and his wife, the Princess Topaz, had lived and reigned happily. But there was in their lives a great sorrow: they had no child, and they desired one exceedingly. For many years this sorrow lay upon them, until at length they resolved to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella, in Spain, to pray there more fervently that their sorrow might be removed. The journey was long and dangerous, but they reached the shrine in safety; and their prayers ere long were answered, and a daughter was born to them. But as they returned through Spain misfortune fell upon them. The Saracen King, Felix, who at that time was ravaging the country, attacked their escort, killed Perse, and carried off Topaz and her child to his own dominions. There he gave them in charge to his wife, who had borne a son on the same day as the daughter of Topaz was born. The girl was named Blanchefleur, the boy Floris; and they were brought up together at the court of King Felix from their earliest days until

they were seven years old. There was no fairer boy in the land than Floris, no fairer maid than Blanchefleur; and they grew so fond of one another that they wished never to be separated.

When they were seven years old, King Felix saw that it was time for Floris to learn all that young princes should know. Blanchefleur he would bring up suitably, but as she grew older, the King knew, she could no longer be a companion for Floris.

"Dear son," he said to Floris, "it is time for you to learn what beseems the prince who is heir to my kingdom. You must give up your playing with Blanchefleur, and learn to do a man's work."

"Sire," answered Floris, "may not Blanchefleur be taught with me? I can learn nought, neither singing nor reading, without her."

"Is it even so?" said Felix. "Then because of your great love, dear son, Blanchefleur shall be your companion still."

So the two were taught together; and their love for one another grew every day stronger.

But Felix was troubled at heart when he saw how dear they were to one another; for he knew that their love would not have grown less when they were older, but rather far greater. Yet for all their love, Blanchefleur, the daughter of a Christian prisoner, spared by the King's grace, and brought up in her mother's faith, could never wed Floris, who would one day be King among the Saracens.

"See, dear wife," he said to the Queen on a certain day when Floris and Blanchefleur had been taught

together for several years more, "this love between them must cease. The Christian maid shall be put to death, and Floris will forget her, and take such a wife as befits my heir."

"Nay, sire," answered the Queen, "you cannot slay Blanchefleur; that would bring shame and dishonour upon us; and besides, her mother, the Lady Topaz, is ill, and it would be cruel to slay her daughter now. I have another plan."

"Tell me what to do," said King Felix.

"Let us send our son, Floris, away to my sister in Mountargis. She will be glad to see him, and will speedily win him away from this love of his for Blanchefleur."

"It shall be done," said the King; and forthwith he sent for Floris, who came to him with Blanchefleur.

"To-morrow, dear son Floris," said Felix, "you must go for a space to your aunt in Mountargis. She would fain see you, and I wish you to do her all courtesy."

At that Blanchefleur cried lamentably, and Floris caught her in his arms. "I cannot go without Blanchefleur," he said.

"I cannot send a Christian slave to visit your aunt," said the King. "Blanchefleur is but a prisoner's daughter; you and your kin are of royal blood."

But no words prevailed with Floris. He refused to go to Mountargis unless Blanchefleur went; and in the end they promised that if he would go to Mountargis, Blanchefleur should follow him in fourteen days' time.

So Floris went to Mountargis, sorrowful and heavy at heart at leaving Blanchefleur. For fourteen days he

abode there in great grief, moaning and making lamentation, and taking little food. On the fourteenth day he made merry cheer, for he looked to see Blanchefleur come. But she came not, for King Felix meant to stop their comradeship, and would not let her go.

When Floris found that she did not come, he doubled his sorrow; he would take neither meat nor drink, and became so weak and ill that in dismay the chamberlain of Mountargis sent and told King Felix that his son was love-sick almost to death.

When the King heard how Floris mourned, his anger against Blanchefleur broke out anew. "Bring forth that maiden Blanchefleur," he cried; "I will strike her head from off her body."

"For God's love, Sir King," said the Queen, "have pity, and do not kill Blanchefleur. See, here is a way to be rid of her. Even now there are present at the harbour, newly arrived, certain chapmen and merchants from Babylon, traders of great wealth. If you offer them merchandise so fair as Blanchefleur, they will give you much store of rich goods in exchange. So we shall be rid of her without harm."

Against his will the King did as his Queen advised, and sent for a citizen who was courteous and a cunning trader, and skilled in many tongues, that he might treat with the merchants of Babylon for the sale of Blanchefleur. With them he speedily came to terms, and the price paid for Blanchefleur was twenty marks of gold, and a rich cup the like of which there was not in all the world. On the cup were wrought many devices, and on the handle there was a great

"'Sir King, have pity, and do not kill Blanchefleur.'"

carbuncle. Once in the old days Aeneas had won this cup at the siege of Troy; and thereafter it lay in Rome till it was stolen from the Emperor by that same rogue who now gave it exchange for Blanchefleur. Great was the joy of King Felix when he saw this costly cup.

So Blanchefleur was sold; and the merchants bore her away in their ships to far-off Babylon, where they sold her to the Admiral of Babylon himself, for seven times her weight in gold.

Floris, alone in Mountargis, had mourned many days because Blanchefleur had not come. They told him that she was delayed, and made many a lying tale to deceive him. But at length he began to despair of seeing her again unless he himself set to work; and he left his lamentations, and rode back to his home in a fury. He came straightway to the King's presence, and as the King and Queen greeted him, without more ado he asked where Blanchefleur was. But for all his asking they would give him no answer. And he asked the lady Topaz, Blanchefleur's mother, where she was.

"Prince Floris, in truth I know not," she answered, and fell a-weeping.

"You lie," he cried. "These tales do but add to my woe. Tell me where my love is."

"She is dead," said Topaz, and wept more bitterly than ever. She believed in truth that her daughter was no longer alive, for when Blanchefleur was sold, the King had given out that she was dead, and had built a splendid tomb in her honour.

At those tidings Floris swooned outright. The King and Queen were sent for; and as they gazed sorrowfully on him, Floris came to his senses.

"Take me to where Blanchefleur lies," he said.

They took him to the tomb; and at the words graven on it—"Here lies sweet Blanchefleur, the beloved of Floris"—he swooned again. For many days he lay ill, half in a swoon, half raving with madness. He would eat nothing, but sat weeping or silent; ever and again he would start up, calling upon Blanchefleur's name, and once, in his madness, he came near to taking his own life, had not the Queen prevented him.

When the Queen perceived that no remedy cured Floris's grief, she went to King Felix, and bade him tell his son all the truth. "I would rather Blanchefleur were his wife," she said, "than that my son should die of sorrow."

"Dame, you speak truth," answered the King; "would that we had never gainsaid him;" and forthwith he sent for Floris, and told him all—how Blanchefleur was not dead, for they had sold her to certain merchants of Babylon, who had carried her away overseas.

"Is this truth, my mother dear? asked Floris of the Queen, when the King had made an end of speaking.

"It is true," she answered. "Blanchefleur is not in the tomb, nor in any place in this land." And they took him to the tomb, and put aside the great stone on it, and showed him that it was empty.

"It is true," said Floris. "Now hear me, my mother, and you, my father. I will not rest night or day, at

any time, till I have found my love. I will go seek her, if it be to the world's end."

The King spoke, and the Queen spoke, but they could not say him nay; and at last they commended him to God, and equipped him to go forth in search of Blanchefleur. They gave him seven horses of price for his gear, two of them laden with silver and gold, two with money to spend on the way, and three with costly raiment, the richest that was in the King's house; and with them seven knights and seven squires to serve them. Also there went with Floris the King's own chamberlain, a man noble and discreet, to guide and give him counsel. Himself was given a fair white palfrey, with a wrought saddle, and precious stones and a golden fringe upon the saddle-bow.

"Dear son," said the Queen, when Floris took his leave of her, "take also this ring. While it is yours, fire cannot burn you, nor the sea harm you; neither iron nor steel can do you hurt."

Forth Floris rode with all his company; and so began his search for Blanchefleur, his love.

II. The Quest of Floris

Before long Floris came to the haven by which the merchants had taken Blanchefleur away to sea; and by chance he rested for a while at the very inn where Blanchefleur also had lain before the merchant set sail with her. Floris called for meat and drink for the chamberlain and all his company; but he himself would

neither eat nor drink. All his thoughts ran on Blanchefleur, as he sat apart, heavy-hearted and sorrowful.

"This is no merchant," said the hostess of the inn to herself, when she saw his grief. "See how he sits apart, fasting, and mourns to himself." And out of kindness she spoke to him. "Sir, you are sad," she said. "Even thus, as you do, did that fair maid, Blanchefleur, sit and mourn, but a few days ago. There were merchants here, who carried her away to Babylon; and I vow that you lament just as she lamented, though you are a man and she a maid."

Floris' heart leapt with gladness when he heard the name of his love. He filled a rich cup with wine, and gave it to the hostess.

"Dame, this is yours, both cup and wine," he said, "for you have spoken of my dear lady. On her run all my thoughts, for her I grieve, and her I seek continually; neither wind nor weather shall stay me till I find her again."

Floris lay at the inn that night, and dreamed happily of Blanchefleur. As soon as it was day he rose, and took his leave of the kind hostess, and set sail with good hopes for the port of Babylon.

When he came to the port, once again good fortune befell him, for the keeper of his inn soon learnt his errand from his sad demeanour, and gave him fresh tidings of Blanchefleur. But the tidings were ill. Blanchefleur had been sold, he said, to the Admiral of Babylon, who desired to make her his queen: she was kept among his maidens, in the tower of his castle. "And for your goodness, sir," said the

innkeeper, "I will help you. When you come to Babylon, you will see a great bridge, and a warden, Sir Daris, at the gate of it. He is a courteous and ready man, mine own friend, and he will serve you well, as if it were myself, if you but give him this ring for a token from me."

Floris took the ring, and set out once more. By noon of that day he came to the bridge, and found Daris as the host of the inn had said.

"Rest you merry, Sir Daris," he said and gave him the ring.

Daris knew the token, and took Floris to his house, and entertained him richly, with all his company. But Floris eat and drank but little, for the thought of Blanchefleur was in his heart. When Sir Daris saw that he was sorrowful, he asked the reason.

"I am thinking of certain wares of mine," answered Floris, veiling his true meaning at first, through caution. "I have come hither to find them; and I know not whether I shall find them, or, if I do find them, whether I shall not lose them wholly."

Daris saw that something was hidden from him; but he answered courteously: "I would fain hear all, sir; it would be better if you told me your grief truly."

Floris trusted Sir Daris, and he told him all his story. "I will find my lady, and rescue her, whatever befall," he ended.

"You speak rashly," said the warden of the gate. "You seek your own death. The Admiral of Babylon is so mighty that more than a hundred great kings

are his vassals; and the richest and greatest of them all durst not try such a deed as you have vowed to do. This city of Babylon, at the gate whereof we now are, is as large as many other cities put together. It is sixty miles round; twenty strong towers are set round its walls, each great enough to contain a market-town. Even if all the men on earth had vowed to aid you, you might as easily steal the sun and moon from the high heaven as Blanchefleur from the Admiral of Babylon."

"Nevertheless I will do it," said Floris.

"Will you so?" said Sir Daris. "Hear now concerning the castle where Blanchefleur lies. It is set in the very midst of Babylon, and is a thousand fathoms high; its walls are of limestone and marble, which no sword can cut. No man can come at it without being seen, and neither torch nor lantern is needed at night; for in a cupola on the top of the castle is a great carbuncle, that blazes and shines both by day and by night: at night it is as bright as day, and by day the carbuncle outshines the very sun. Within the castle are kept always forty-four maidens, strictly guarded, and one of them is Blanchefleur. By our religion the Admiral may have many wives; and every year he chooses from these forty-four maidens a new wife, in this wise. There is in the castle a fair orchard, wherein many birds sing; it is girt with a wall of precious stones, whereof the least precious is crystal. In the midst of the orchard is an enchanted well, wherefrom a stream bubbles perpetually: it is said that the stream comes from Paradise

itself. The maidens may wash in this water; but if any woman that is married comes thereto, the water boils with a screaming sound, and turns as red as blood. Nigh this well stands a tree, the fairest that may be on earth: it is called the Tree of Love, and on it grow many blossoms. When the time is come for the Admiral to choose a wife, the maidens are brought to the orchard; and when they have been tested by the water of the well, they are led one by one under the Tree of Love. The first on whom a blossom falls from the tree is chosen to be the Admiral's wife. But it is said that this choice is not of chance only; if there be any maiden whom the Admiral loves especially, on her he causes a blossom to fall; and men say that this year it will assuredly fall on Blanchefleur."

Floris had looked for many dangers in his search for Blanchefleur; but what Daris told him made him almost despair; and when the warden ceased speaking, he fell suddenly into a swoon.

The good Sir Daris raised him up, and had him cared for; and when Floris came again to his senses, the first words that he spoke were, "Sir Daris, I die if you will not help me to win Blanchefleur."

"I like it not," said Sir Daris. "But I will rack my brains to find a plan for you."

Before long he had thought of a plan. "You must put on the garb of a mason," he said to Floris, "and go to the castle, and look stedfastly upon the measurements of it. Presently the warden of the castle will come to you, a fierce and cruel man; he will take you

for a spy, and speak roughly to you. Do you answer with gentleness and courtesy, saying that you are a mason from a far country, bidden to make a castle like this one, whereof the fame has spread into all lands. The warden will then speak more courteously, and will ask you many questions : answer him in friendly sort ; and presently (for he is a crafty and avaricious fellow) he will propose to play you at chess, in the hope of winning money from you. Let him win, and lose a wager of twenty marks or so on the game ; that will make him desire to see more of you. On the next day play with him again, and lose thirty marks, and let him see a certain rich golden cup which you have. His greed will make him long for this cup, but you must refuse it to him, saying that it is very precious. On the third day go to him yet again, and this time you must give him the golden cup. You must make him altogether your man by this gift ; he will do anything for riches ; and if you show him thus that you are both rich and generous, he will serve you well, and you may use him to get into the tower where your lady lies. I can give you no other plan than this. If you get into the tower, you must trust to your own wits for the rest."

"I thank you heartily, Sir Daris," said Floris ; and forthwith he set about carrying out this plan. In every point he did exactly as Daris had said, until at last the warden of the Admiral's castle vowed that he would serve him in any way he pleased.

"You are my man, then," said Floris. "I trust you, and you must help me thus and thus ;" and he told the man his errand.

"Alas, I am betrayed," said the warden of the castle, when he heard what Floris wished. "I am in sorry case; I have vowed to help you, and must do so, but it will be to my death."

But Floris spoke him fair and soft, and promised him yet greater rewards in return for his aid.

"I have great fears," said the man at last. "But I will help you, none the less. Give me three days to think of a plan; go you to your inn for that space."

In three days Floris came again, and the warden of the castle took him to a private room. There he showed him a great basket, bigger than a man, filled to the brim with flowers. "These flowers," he said, "I have caused to be gathered from the meadows. They are for the maidens' bowers, and I have to send them many baskets like these from day to day. Now get you into this basket, and try whether you can be seen in it or not."

Floris crept into the basket, and they found that if flowers were strewn upon him he was wholly hidden. Then the warden covered him up, and summoned two stout slaves, and bade them carry the basket to Blanchefleur's tower.

The slaves took up the basket, grumbling at the heaviness of it. They bore it into the castle, but at every step the weight pressed on them more, and seemed heavier and heavier. So weary did they become that at last they set the basket down in the first chamber they reached, and left it there.

Now this chamber belonged to a maiden named Clarice, who chanced to be very dear to Blanchefleur.

She was alone when the basket was brought in. At the sight of the flowers, she rose and went towards them, to admire their loveliness more closely. As he heard her footstep near the basket, Floris, half stifled by the flowers, and eager to see (as he hoped) his lady love, lifted his head and shoulders, and sat up, the flowers falling off him.

At that strange sight Clarice gave a loud cry; and in a moment the sound of footsteps drew near. The other maidens had heard her cry.

"Now my life is not worth a straw," thought Floris. But he crouched down in the basket again, and covered himself with the flowers, thinking that even now he might remain hidden, if the maiden had mercy on him.

Clarice was kind-hearted, and knew that it meant death to this stranger if he were caught. She made a reassuring sign to him, and as her friends came running in, she began to laugh at their questions and fears.

"It is nought," she said. "This basket of flowers has just been brought for me, and I went to look at it. As I stooped over it, a great butterfly suddenly flew out into my face and so startled me that I cried aloud."

The maidens in turn laughed at the reason for her cry, and left her. Then Clarice went once more to the basket, and bade Floris come out; and in a little while she had heard from him all his story.

"I will aid you," she said, and ran to Blanchefleur's chamber.

"Floris sat up, the flowers falling off him."

"Come, Blanchefleur," she said, "a fair and wondrous flower has been brought to me, and I would fain show it to you."

"Do not mock me with your flowers," said Blanchefleur. "Nought can give me joy when I know this the Admiral is minded to make me his wife: I know this without doubt; he will cause the blossom of the Tree of Love to fall first on me. Ah! why was I ever born? I am the most unhappy maiden in the world! Floris has forgotten me, and I must wed this terrible Admiral. But Floris has my heart, and I can love no other."

Clarice smiled at those words. "Come now and see my flower," she said, and took Blanchefleur by the hand, and led her to Floris.

No man can tell of the joy of those two at their meeting. They thought of nothing but that they were together again, and hardly heeded Clarice at all.

"Is it not a fair flower, dear friend?" asked Clarice. "You would not come to see this flower a minute ago, and now you will not let it go from your arms."

But at that moment she remembered that it was the hour when she and Blanchefleur were appointed to serve the Admiral with water and comb and mirror for his toilet.

"Alas, we are undone!" she cried. "But I will none the less go to the Admiral, and make some excuse for you, Blanchefleur."

She went to the Admiral. But when he saw not Blanchefleur, whom he loved so fiercely that he was

minded to make her his wife, he asked angrily where she was.

"My lord Admiral," answered Clarice, "Blanchefleur has fallen ill through regard for you. All last night she sat at a book of devotions, and read it, and thought upon you, so that to-day she is utterly wearied, and is sleeping."

"Is it indeed as you say, Clarice?" asked the Admiral.

"Yes, my lord; she is overcome with joy at finding favour in your sight, and would fain spend all her time in thinking of you."

"It is well," said the Admiral. "I shall do wisely to make her my wife. But see that she comes with you when next I need you."

With that Clarice withdrew, and returned to Floris and Blanchefleur, and told them of the Admiral's words. But they could think of no plan to escape.

Presently again came the hour for Clarice and Blanchefleur to wait upon the Admiral. Clarice was alone at the time, and went by herself to the Admiral, expecting to find Blanchefleur there already. But Blanchefleur was not with the Admiral, who asked at once where she was.

Clarice was taken by surprise; she had warned Blanchefleur of the Admiral's command that she should come without fail. She could utter never a word of excuse.

"What, you know not where she is?" cried the Admiral, seeing that she did not answer: "I will look into this!"

With that he drew his sword, and rushed from his

chamber. Straight to Blanchefleur's bower he went, and threw the door wide open, and discovered Floris and Blanchefleur together, aghast with fear at his sudden coming.

"Tell me now, young sir," roared the Admiral, "who made you so bold as to creep into my castle among my maidens? It is an ill day for you that I find you here: you shall die!"

Forthwith he summoned his guards and ordered them to bind both Floris and Blanchefleur, and cast them into a dungeon. Then he sent forth messengers, and bade all his barons and earls and vassals come speedily to his castle, to a great council; and when they were come, he told them all that had happened, and asked what punishment should be given to Floris and Blanchefleur.

Up stood a free burgher. "Let us see and hear these two, Lord Admiral," he cried, "before we condemn them."

"Nay," said the King of Nubia, "they are felons; burn them at the stake without more ado."

They debated long as to what was meet to be done. In the end they decided to put Floris and Blanchefleur to death by burning, and to send for them straightway, that their sentence might be told to them by the Admiral himself.

Floris and Blanchefleur were brought into the council chamber weeping bitterly. As they came Floris took from his finger the magic ring given him by his mother, whereby no hurt could come to him, and gave it to Blanchefleur.

"Dear Blanchefleur," he said, "take this ring and wear it. While it is on your finger no hurt can come to you. So shall you be saved; I must needs die, for I have brought about my own fate. I fear not even death, so as you be safe."

"I cannot take it, Floris," answered Blanchefleur. "Without you I cannot live; if you die, then will I die also."

As they spoke, they came into the council chamber, and by chance the ring was dropped. A certain Duke among the Admiral's vassals picked it up; he had heard how each had refused to live if the other died.

"Floris and Blanchefleur," said the Admiral, "it is decreed that you both be burnt at the stake. You, Floris, tell me if there is any reason why you should not die."

"Lord Admiral," answered Floris, "I have deserved death at your hands by working secretly against you. Slay me if you will. I am ready to die. But I beseech you spare this my lady Blanchefleur."

"Nay, my lord," cried Blanchefleur, "slay me, but spare Floris; or if you must slay him, let me too die."

"You shall both die," cried the Admiral, in a rage at their love for one another; and he drew his sword to kill them where they stood.

"Hold, Lord Admiral!" said a voice; and the Duke who had picked up the enchanted ring came forward.

"One of them could have been saved," he cried, "yet neither was willing to live alone. Here is an enchanted ring which would have saved one of them." And he

told how he had heard Floris and Blanchefleur talking together, and had picked up the ring when they dropped it. "Have pity, my lord," he said. "Their love is so great that they should be spared. Only let them tell all their story, and see if there be not room for pity when you have heard it."

The Admiral looked on Floris and Blanchefleur. Never in the time of prosperity did Floris look so fair or Blanchefleur so sweet as now they seemed in their sadness. He saw many a man among his vassals weeping at the sight of them; and since he himself had loved the fair maid so dearly, he let his sword fall, and turned his head away weeping.

"Tell me how you came hither," he said to Floris, after a space; and Floris told all the story of their love, from the day when first he was sent away from Blanchefleur to his aunt in Mountargis.

"Your love has been great," said the Admiral, when Floris had made an end. "I pardon you, and I will raise you to great honour."

He bade Floris kneel before him, and dubbed him knight before all his vassals. Then he said to him, "You are a King's son; sit on my right hand. In a little time you shall be wedded to Blanchefleur; and for her sake, since she is a Christian, I and all my people will become Christians also. I will give up the having of many wives, and will have but one; if it please her, I will wed the lady Clarice. Now let us hold festival and merry cheer."

Many a day did they revel and make merry; and at the end the Admiral married Clarice, and Floris, having

been baptized into the Christian faith, married Blanchefleur. Then Floris and Blanchefleur departed to go to their home; and when King Felix died, they ruled in his stead, and lived many years happily and in the fear of God.

Amys and Amylion

TWO barons dwelt formerly in Lombardy, close together, lords of high lineage, princes in town and tower. Each had one son, born on the same day. The name of one boy was Amys, of the other Amylion; there were none fairer alive, so courteous, comely, and good were they. As if to strengthen the friendship that stood between their fathers, they were wonderfully alike in face and in figure; and by the time they were twelve years old, not even their own kin could tell one from the other of them, save by the different hue of their clothes.

It chanced that one year the Duke of Lombardy held a rich feast, lasting fourteen days, and bade thereto all his vassals and lords and barons. These two barons were summoned, and took their sons with them, and joined in the mirth and minstrelsy of their lord. All the court saw how fair the two boys were, and marvelled at the likeness between them; and before the feast ended the Duke himself called their fathers, and asked that Amys and Amylion might be put in service with him, to be his pages, to learn the

ways of knighthood, and afterwards to be knighted if they proved worthy. They readily agreed to this, and Amys and Amylion remained at the Duke's court, and were taught together, and grew to love one another yet more closely.

When they came to man's estate, the Duke knighted them, finding them worthy of honour in all ways of courtesy and knightly deeds; and they swore to each other to be thenceforth brothers-in-arms, and to help each other at need from that day forward, in weal or woe, in wrong or right, in will and in deed, in word and work, so long as they lived.

Very soon the Duke gave them posts of honour at his court. But there was one who was jealous of the favour he showed them—the chief steward, a doughty man in battle, but fierce and treacherous in his hatreds and dislikes.

It chanced within a year of their knighthood that the father of Sir Amylion died, being old and feeble; and his vassals sent messengers asking Amylion to come among them and rule over them. Amylion knew that it was his duty to go; but he was loath to leave Amys. Nevertheless, he made up his mind to depart, and bade Amys farewell tenderly. But before he went he caused two cups of gold to be made, of great price, curiously wrought, and as like to one another as Amylion was to Amys. One he kept himself; the other he gave to Amys, saying, "Keep this cup in memory of me, dear brother. God speed you: be true to me, and I will be as true to you. If ever you need a friend, remember our oath of brotherhood,

and come to me or send a messenger to me, and I will aid you with all the power of my lands."

"Farewell, Amylion," answered Amys. "I will be true to you. Never will I let this cup go from me. Whenever I look thereon I shall think of you."

So Amylion departed to his own lands, and married a wife there, and dwelt happily; and Amys abode with the Duke, making sorry cheer when his brother-in-arms was gone.

But the false steward was glad when Amys was left alone. He cast about for means to do him hurt, but found none; and he knew that if he wronged Amys without a cause, the anger of the Duke and all his court would fall heavily on him. But he soon found a way to pick a quarrel.

"You grieve because your brother-in-arms is gone," he said to Amys one day, with all courtesy and seeming friendliness. "So do I, for he was a fair and goodly knight, and all men loved him. But take comfort; there are others who may be your friend as well as he. Take me for your brother-in-arms, and plight your word to me. You will find me a truer friend than Amylion."

"Nay, that may not be," answered Amys. "I gave my word to Amylion, and can be comrade in like manner to no other man. No man can be so true as Amylion."

The steward had looked for some such answer as this. Nevertheless he fell into a rage at the slight which seemed to be put upon him. "Traitor! Base knave!" he cried in wrath. "You will rue this day.

I warn you, from now I am your foe, by day and by night, without ceasing,"

"I care not a sloe for your enmity," said Amys. "Do what you please."

The steward went from him, his hatred of Amys increased a thousandfold by the quarrel. Before long he carried out a plot against him.

The Duke had one daughter, Belisaunt, of marriageable age, very fair to look on. Many earls and barons and knights sought her hand, but she would wed none of them; for it chanced that a little while before the steward quarrelled with Amys, she asked her maidens who was the doughtiest knight at the Duke's court; and they answered with one accord that Amys had no peer among them all for valour and comeliness. Thereupon she looked with favour upon Amys, and little by little fell deep in love with him. So strong was her love that she felt as if her heart would break if she could not wed him; her cheeks grew pale, all her mirth was lost, and she looked like one stricken with wasting sickness. All the court saw her sorry cheer, but none knew the reason of it.

On a certain day the Duke went a-hunting. Amys was left behind in charge of the palace, and he went to sit in a little garden full of shady trees. The sun shone bright through the boughs; birds great and small sang merrily, and all was fair and pleasant to look on.

But it chanced that Belisaunt also came to walk in this garden, and saw Sir Amys sitting under a tree.

She bade her maidens leave her, and went to Amys, and sat down by his side. He greeted her courteously, but knew not why she sought him out until she suddenly began to tell him of her love.

"Sir knight, hear me," she said. "I have set my heart upon you; I think of nought but you, day and night. I pray you wed me; I will plight my troth to you, and be true to you till God and death do part us."

Amys was filled with wonder. He answered gently, "Bethink you, sweet lady, I am but a simple knight. No king's son, no emperor is too high or too proud to wed you. You do wrong to talk of love to one so lowly as a knight."

But Belisaunt pleaded with him long, and at last he yielded a little. "Dear lady," he said, for she was very fair, and he would fain have given her his love in return, if he had been of her rank, "you ask a hard thing; yet I am almost persuaded to grant it. Give me seven days that I may think upon it; on the seventh day will I answer you."

"So shall it be," answered Belisaunt.

The seven days passed. But Belisaunt seemed unable to hide her joy (for she felt sure that Amys would yield), and her happiness showed itself in her face. All her paleness and sorrow left her, and she became lovelier than ever, so that the court marvelled at the change in her. The steward also noticed that her health had been suddenly restored to her, and he watched her closely. All her looks, he saw, were bent on Amys. If Amys was in the same chamber, her face lit up with joy and gladness; if he was absent, she

seemed sad and weary. But Amys looked as if some great matter hung heavy on his mind.

The seventh day came. The false steward, still watching, saw Belisaunt go to her chamber with a look on her face as if she were going to some great happiness. In a little while Amys followed her. The steward stole after them, and contrived to enter the chamber unseen, and hide himself behind the tapestries that covered the walls; there he listened to their words.

"It is the seventh day, Amys," said Belisaunt. "What is your answer?"

"Dear lady, I would gladly wed you," answered Amys, "but my lord the Duke would have none of it. He would slay me if I so much as asked him for your hand. I am but a poor knight. If I were king of this land, rich in gold and silver, then might I hope to win you."

"Will you for ever be saying nay? Can you not set aside your fears, and be bold, and claim me for wife? Poor though you be, yet I have riches enough for both. I pray you marry me, or I shall die."

"Lady Belisaunt, you have won all my love," answered Amys. "I will wed you; the Duke himself shalt not say me nay."

And he took her in his arms and kissed her.

The steward had heard enough. He knew that no bold words would save Amys from the Duke's wrath when he heard what had come to pass. The Duke looked for some king or great prince to wed his daughter; he would scorn a humble knight.

"The false steward listened to their words."

No time was to be lost. The steward went at once to the Duke.

"Lord Duke," he said, "is not your daughter a maid of great price? Have not princes and kings sought her hand?"

"It is even so," answered the Duke. "But what mean you by this talk, Sir Steward?"

"Shall a plain knight win her in marriage?"

"Nay, that may never be. Belisaunt is for no knight; she must look for a greater man."

"I tell you, lord Duke, that even now she is with a knight of your court, and he has vowed to wed her. Sir Amys is his name."

"Sir Amys!" said the Duke. "Ah, have I trusted him too well? I have advanced him in my favour, and he repays me thus!"

He started up from his seat, and rushed from his chamber, drawing his sword as he ran. He met Amys coming from Belisaunt, and made at him as if to slay him.

Amys was unarmed, and he could not resist. He turned and fled down a long passage and into a room at the end, slamming the door quickly just as the Duke struck at him. The sword missed him, and pierced the panel of the door, and stuck fast there, buried deep in the wood.

When Amys saw that the Duke could no longer harm him, he came forth.

"What evil have I done, my lord?" he asked, with all reverence and courtesy.

"You have sought to wed my daughter, presump-

tuous knave," cried the Duke in wrath. "You shall die."

In a moment all Amys' brave resolves were forgotten; he remembered only once more that he was a humble knight, and Belisaunt a great lady whose love he durst not seek.

"It is false, my lord Duke," he answered. "I am too lowly to beg the hand of the lady Belisaunt. Who brings this charge? I will prove my words upon his body in single combat!"

"My steward brings it. You shall answer him with the sword, since you wish it. Come now, and you and he shall give pledges that you will fight together on a certain day. In fourteen days from now shall you fight."

The steward easily found a score of men to pledge their word that he would not shrink from the fight. But when it was known that it was with the steward that Amys was to fight, no man durst stand up for him, for the steward was known to be both crafty and powerful, and quick to take vengeance on his enemies or the friends of his enemies.

"Will no man give a pledge for Sir Amys?" said the Duke. "Then he cannot fight the steward; or if he must fight, he must abide in my dungeon till the appointed day, since he can give no surety that he will fight if I let him go free."

But Belisaunt heard her sire's words. "Never shall he be cast into a dungeon," she cried. "I and my lady mother the Duchess will pledge ourselves for him. If he does not fight on the appointed day, but

shrinks and is a recreant knight, then slay us, his sureties."

For Belisaunt had told her mother of her love for Amys; and the Duchess took their part. But she durst not say ought of it to the fierce Duke.

"So be it," said the Duke. "You shall be sureties for Amys; and if he fail to meet my steward, your lives are forfeit: I will not spare you."

But when all things were agreed upon, and there was nought to do but wait for the day of the tournament, Amys began to wear so sad and strange a mien that Belisaunt was filled with fear.

"Dear Amys," she said to him one day when they were alone together, "what ails you? Why do you look sorrowful and distraught?"

"I am a false knight," said Amys; "that is my sorrow. The steward brought a true charge against me, for I love you and will wed you; but I denied it to his face. I am in the wrong and he is in the right; yet must I fight him to prove that he is wrong. I dare not fight; on the appointed day I must take an oath that the steward spoke falsely, and prove it by combat; and if I swear that oath, I am forsworn, and dishonoured, and no true knight"

Belisaunt knew that he was right; the cunning steward had indeed brought a true charge, which Amys must perforce deny or be slain. But she could see no way but to fight.

"Is there no other guile that we can contrive to bring that traitor down?" she asked.

"There is Amylion. Perchance he could aid me in these sore straits."

"How could Amylion avail? You must fight the steward."

"Amylion is exactly like me," answered Amys; "none could tell that he was not I, if he wore my armour. He could deny the charge and fight the steward for me without being himself forsworn. He would willingly give his life for me, if needs be; we are pledged brothers-in-arms."

"Go to him, Amys. The steward is base and treacherous, and deserves death; but you must not be forsworn or fight unjustly. Let Amylion, if he will, take up the battle. Go to him; haste, and tarry not."

Amys made ready his horse with all speed, and set forth at a gallop to ride to Amylion. Many days he rode, spurring the horse on furiously. But at last one night the beast could go no farther, however fiercely he urged it; and as he tried to drive it on, it fell dead under him. Then Sir Amys left it where it fell, and pressed on on foot, now running and now walking, eager to get to his journey's end. But in time his strength, too, gave out, and a little before dawn he sank down on the grass in a great forest on the borders of Amylion's lands. There he lay, and slept heavily, utterly wearied.

Sir Amylion at that time was at a castle not far distant. As he slept that night he had a strange dream; he dreamed that he saw his brother-in-arms, Sir Amys, in the forest near his castle, surrounded by wild beasts and in great peril of his life.

He started up, and called for his horse. When it was ready, he bade his attendants leave him, and rode forth alone to the forest, to the spot where Amys had seemed to be in the dream.

As he drew near, he saw a man stretched upon the ground, asleep, his face hidden in his arms.

"Arise," cried Amylion in a loud voice. "Who are you that sleep in my forest? Wake, and rise up; it is dawn, and honest men should no longer sleep."

The man stirred and turned over. It was Amys.

Great was their joy at their meeting. But Amys lost no time in telling Amylion of his mission, and begging him to take his place and fight the steward.

"I will do it," answered Amylion. "Gladly will I serve you, dear Amys. But none must know of it save us twain and Belisaunt. My own wife must not know. You must take my place here, and be to her in all things like me."

Sir Amys agreed. They went back together to the castle, and entered by a private door. Amylion showed Amys all that was needful, and they changed clothes. Then Amylion departed secretly, and set out for the Duke's court.

Amys for a little time feigned sickness, so as to learn the ways of the castle. But it was not possible to make the pretence long, for they would have summoned surgeons, and made a great to-do, and he might have been discovered. Before long he felt safer, and began to use the castle and act in all ways as if he were its lord. Only in one thing did he draw back. When he came to lie down at night in bed beside Amylion's wife, he set

a naked sword between them, that he might not touch her, since he was not her husband: and when she asked him what this meant (for she believed that he was her lord Amylion), he said that he had a disease, and feared to touch her because of it; therefore had he put the sword between them, lest in his sleep he should draw nearer to her.

The day for the tournament came, and Amylion had not yet reached the Duke's court; Belisaunt was in despair. But the false steward, when he rode into the lists and found no enemy to meet him, was filled with evil joy.

"Lord Duke," he cried, "Sir Amys is proved a coward and a traitor; he has fled from this combat. His sureties are forfeit, and my charge is proved true."

The Duke knew not how to answer. There was no man there to meet the steward. But if Amys had indeed fled, Belisaunt and the Duchess herself must die, for they had stood surety to him.

"Bid them come hither," he said at last, with a stern face, for he had made up his mind to keep his word and slay them if Amys did not appear.

Belisaunt and the Duchess were brought in, and the Duke told them their fate, and caused them to be bound; and there in the lists they waited, to see if by good fortune Amys should come at the last moment.

Amylion had pricked his horse on unceasingly; night and day he rode, and came to the Duke's castle at last on the very day appointed for the combat. He went to Amys' chamber, and armed himself speedily, so that in every way he looked like his brother-in-arms. Then

he rode towards the lists, hoping that he might even now, though late, be in time.

As he rode, a strange prophecy was made to him. He heard a voice as it were speaking from heaven to him, and none but he heard it.

"Knight! Sir Amylion!" said the voice, "God sends you word by me. If you take up this combat for Amys, within three years strange chances shall befall you. Ere three years pass, there shall be no man in all Christendom more loathsome than you. Care and sorrow and poverty shall come upon you. In all your lands those who are your best friends shall be your bitter foes; and your wife and all your kind shall shun you, and forsake you utterly."

Amylion stood still as a stone at the terrible words. He believed that they were true, and he knew not what he should do, whether to flee or to persevere and fight and take whatever might befall him.

"If I be known by name," he thought, "shame will come upon Amys for refusing the combat, and they will slay him. I have given him my word, and I will not depart from it. I will fight: let God do with me as it pleases Him."

He spurred quickly to the lists. A great shout went up from all men at the sight of him, for Belisaunt and the Duchess were just being led away to death.

"Sir knight," cried the Duke, "you are late for your tryst; nevertheless, you are come, and you shall take up your challenge. My steward charges you with having secretly sought the hand of the lady Belisaunt. Do you deny it, and swear that you have not done this thing?"

"I swear it," answered Amylion, truthfully.

"Will you put your oath to the test here and now, by force of arms?"

"I will," said Amys.

With that the Duke bade the fight begin, and the marshals set the lists in order.

The knights charged. At the first shock Amylion smote the steward's horse dead, and it fell with its rider.

"I will slay no man as he lies helpless," said Amylion; and he leapt off his horse, and helped the steward to rise.

Then they fell to on foot with swords. The steward soon wounded Amylion in the shoulder, but Amylion smote back at him so fiercely that his sword pierced through breastplate and skin to the very heart, so that he staggered and fell dead.

Amylion cut off his head and held it up. "I have proved my words, lord Duke," he cried.

"It is well," said the Duke. "I vow I have never seen a man fight more valiantly. For your prowess you shall have the lady Belisaunt in marriage."

Amylion knew that that was what Amys sought. "My lord, I thank you. I am but a humble knight; may I be worthy of so fair a lady. But I pray you give me leave to go from your court for a space, till my wound be healed."

"It is granted. You shall wed Belisaunt in fourteen days from now. Till then take your ease, and heal your wound."

Amylion departed. But he did not go to take his ease. He saddled a fresh horse, and spurred over hill and dale till he came again to his own land, and sought out Amys.

When he heard what had come to pass, Amys thanked him a thousand times. "Brother," he said, when they parted, "if it betide you too to need help, come to me or send a message, and I will never stay, no, not for anything in the world, till I have brought you aid. In right or in wrong I will stand by you for ever."

He bade him farewell, and rode back home and wedded Belisaunt. They dwelt together happily for a year, and then the Duke died, and Amys, since he had wedded the Duke's only child, reigned in his stead. In due time Belisaunt bore him two children; and they were as merry and prosperous as could be.

But Amylion fared ill in his own land. His wife, when she found that the drawn sword no longer lay between them at night, spoke to him about it; and Amylion, since Amys, in his haste to go, had told him nothing of this, answered her in such a manner that suspicion awoke in her. She questioned him straitly, and at last, seeing no other way to satisfy her, Amylion told her all that he had done.

"Oh base knight, false and unworthy!" she cried in great wrath. "You would give me over to a stranger, and fight his battles for him because, forsooth, he had acted so unjustly that he dares not fight himself! The steward has been slain wrongfully, and you have slain him. You shall be no husband of mine from this day forth!"

Amylion could do nought to turn aside her anger. She summoned her kinsmen, men of great might and power, and so wrought upon them that they forced him to leave her, and go and dwell in a lodge at the

gate of his own castle. Herself she dwelt in the castle, and feasted and made merry with her friends.

In a little while yet heavier sorrow came upon Amylion, for he was stricken with leprosy. No man would come near him, save only one page, named Child Owaines, who ministered to him faithfully and lovingly without ceasing.

Thus for well nigh three years Amylion abode in great misery. His leprosy grew worse, and he was in great straits for even bread to eat, and water to drink. And at last he had not so much as a roof to cover his head, for his wife, urged on by a base knight who had become her lover, sent men to turn him out of his little lodge and raze it to the ground. They brought with them two asses, and bade him take them and leave the land altogether.

So sorely had the leprosy afflicted him that he could no longer walk. He had no possessions, save the gold cup which was fellow to the one he had given Amys, and no money to buy food. He bade Child Owaines sell the two asses, and buy with the money a little cart and some provisions: and when this was done Owaines set out to drag him in the cart to the court of Lombardy, where Amys reigned as Duke.

Long and weary was the journey, and they passed through many hardships. But Owaines tended his master in all things gently and lovingly; and so at last, as the three years of the prophecy drew to an end, they came to the court of Lombardy.

Many beggars stood at the castle gates. Amylion took his place among them, for he would not show

himself in his forlorn state to his friend, and bade Owaines conceal his name. There, as they waited, they heard from within the sound of mirth and minstrelsy; lights and warmth and rich food were within; without were only hunger and cold and disease and sorrow.

Presently a knight came by chance from inside to the gate. His eye fell on Amylion, sick and ragged and a leper, and then on Child Owaines, who was tall and comely to look on.

"What do you do here?" he said to Owaines.

"I serve my lord. We seek alms," answered Child Owaines, pointing to Amylion as his master.

"That is your lord?" said the knight in wonder. "Do you serve a ragged leper? I can give you a better service than that. I will make you a page to Duke Amys."

"I thank you, fair sir," answered Owaines. "But I will not leave my master: I will serve him always."

The knight marvelled, but said no more. He returned to the court, and told Amys jestingly of the leper who had a comely page, worthy to be the servant of a great lord.

"He is faithful, in truth," said Amys, when he heard the tale. "I will give him a reward." And he filled with wine the golden cup Amylion had given him. "Take this to him," he said to a squire.

The squire took the cup and brought it out to Child Owaines. "My lord the Duke sends you this wine," he said.

Owaines took the cup and gave it to Amylion to drink

first. When they had drunk it, Amylion felt among his ragged garments, and drew forth the second cup.

The squire was amazed at the sight. The two cups were exactly alike. He knew not how a beggar could have come by so precious and rare a thing, and he went in and told Amys.

Amys ran out swiftly, a drawn sword in his hand. "What is this?" he cried to Amylion, who was so disfigured by sickness and misery that Amys did not recognise him. "Show me your cup."

Amylion held up the cup. "It is Amylion's cup," said Amys. "Rogue, where did you get it?"

"I got it in Amylion's land," said Amylion. "But it is truly mine."

"You lie, knave," cried Amys. "You have stolen the cup from my dear brother-in-arms, and have come hither to try to sell it to me." And he fell upon Amylion and threw him out of the cart and beat him with the flat of his sword, and at last would fain have slain him. But Child Owaines, forgetful of Amylion's command, rushed between them.

"Hold, lord Duke," he cried. "Do not slay Sir Amylion!"

"Amylion! Is it my brother Amylion?" said Amys.

"Even so, Amys," answered Amylion. "I have come to you for aid, even as formerly you came to me. Here is my cup in proof of it; and on my shoulder is the scar of the wound I took in fighting for you."

Amys led him within and heard all his story. Then he and Belisaunt set good cheer before Amylion and Owaines, and cared for them, and made ready to keep

them always at the court; and they sent for skilled physicians, and nursed the leper tenderly.

But no physician availed to take away the disease which God had sent. There seemed to be no hope. Yet deliverance was close at hand.

Christmas drew near, and a wondrous thing came to pass. On a certain night both Amys and Amylion had a vision; they each dreamed that an angel appeared to them, and told them how the leprosy might be cured.

"On Christmas day," said the angel, "let Sir Amys slay his two children at the hour when Christ was born; he shall take their blood, and anoint Amylion with it; and the leprosy shall be cured thereby."

On the morrow Amylion told Amys his dream. "But I put no faith in it," he said, "neither will I seek to be cured thus. I will abide God's will and endure my affliction."

"Dear brother," answered Amys, "I too had the same vision. It shall be done as the angel said."

On Christmas Day early Amys carried out the angel's bidding. He slew his two children secretly, and anointed Amylion with their blood. Immediately the leprosy was healed, and Amylion was clean and whole.

Then Amys went to tell Belisaunt, for he had said nought to her of his dreadful deed. She swooned when she heard of it. But when she came to her senses again, she took courage. "Dear husband, no grief in the world could be like ours," she said. "Yet we have deserved it. If we had not been secret in our love at the first, and if you had answered the

steward's charge truthfully, we might perchance have fared ill; but Amylion would not have come to such sorrow as he has lain in through what he has done for our sakes. If it were my heart itself that were needful to help him, I would gladly give it for him. I rejoice that he is healed. Let us bear our woe as best we may, since God has dealt justly with us."

She went from him to look once more upon her little children. But when she came to the chamber where their bodies lay, she found a great marvel wrought. They were as whole and unhurt as if no man had touched them, and were playing merrily together.

Great was the joy of all at this miracle. And now all sorrow was ended for Amys and Amylion. One thing only was yet to be done. Amylion had been cast out of his lands by his cruel wife; and Amys, being Duke of Lombardy and therefore Amylion's overlord, set matters in train to win back the lands. He gathered a great host, and besieged the false wife in her castle; and at last he took the castle and cast her into prison for the rest of her days, and gave back the lands to Amylion.

But Amylion would no more leave his brother-in-arms. He gave all his lands to Child Owaines, who had served him so well, and persuaded Amys to dub him knight. Himself he dwelt in peace and great happiness for many years with Amys and Belisaunt: and when their time came, the two brothers-in-arms died on the same day, and were laid together in one grave.

Havelok the Dane

HEARKEN to me, good men, wives, and maidens; I will tell you a tale of Havelok, a wight full hardy, ready at need, the stoutest warrior that ever rode a horse.

In former days there was a King of England called Athelwold; the very flower of England was he, and he ruled justly and well. All things in his realm he ordered strictly, and maintained truth and right throughout the land. Under his rule robbers and traitors were put down; men bought and sold freely, without fear, and wrongdoers were so hard pressed that they could but lurk and creep in secret corners. Athelwold set up justice in his kingdom. There was mercy for the fatherless in his day; his judgments could not be turned aside by bribes of silver and gold. If any man did evil, the King's arm reached him, to punish him, were he never so wary and strong.

This Athelwold had no heir, save only one daughter, very fair to look upon, named Goldborough. But ere

she grew up, when as yet she could neither walk on her feet nor speak, the King fell ill of a dire sickness. He knew well that his time was come, and that death was nigh him. "What shall I do now?" he said in his heart. "I know full well my hour of judgment is upon me. How shall my daughter fare when I am dead? My heart is troubled for her: I think nought of myself. She cannot yet speak or walk: if she were of age to ride, she could rule England, and I would care nought about dying."

But it was idle to lament. The King was sure in his mind that he must die, and he sent messengers to all his vassals, to his earls, and his barons, rich and poor, from Roxburgh to Dover, bidding them come to him speedily where he lay sick.

All those who heard his message were sad at the tidings, and prayed that he might be delivered from death. They came with all speed to the King at Winchester.

"Welcome," said he, when they entered the hall of his dwelling. "Full glad am I that you are come, though gladness helps little now, when I am nigh the point of death. You see in what sorry case I lie. I have bidden you here that you may know that my daughter shall be your lady when I, your lord, am dead. But she is yet a child, and I am fain to make some true man her guardian till she be a woman grown: I will that Godrich, Earl of Cornwall, do guard her and bring her up. He is a true man, wise in counsel and wise in deed, and men have him in awe."

They brought a holy book to the King. On it he made Earl Godrich swear a solemn oath to keep Goldborough well and truly, till she was of age to rule and to order the realm of England wisely. Then the little maid was given to the Earl, her new guardian. Athelwold thanked the Earl, and bade him be true to his charge; and in a little while death took the good King.

When King Athelwold was dead, and the long lamentation for him ended, Godrich ruled England. In every castle he set some knight of his own, whom he could trust: all the English folk he caused to take an oath to be faithful to him; and in a little while Athelwold's realm was altogether in his power.

In the meantime Goldborough was kept at Winchester, and brought up as befitted a King's daughter. Every day she seemed to grow in wisdom and fairness, till when she was twenty years old there was none like her in the land. But Godrich, when he saw how good and how fair she was, grew jealous of her. "Shall she be Queen over me?" he thought. "Must I give up my kingdom and my power to her? She has waxed all too proud; I have treated her with too great gentleness. She shall not be Queen. I will rule, and after me my son shall be King."

As that treason crept into his mind, he forgot his oath to Athelwold, caring not a straw for it. Without more ado he sent for Goldborough from Winchester, and took her to Dover. There he set her in a strong castle, and clad her meanly, and guarded her so

strictly that no man could see her or come at her without his leave.

Now it chanced that about this time the same thing came to pass in Denmark as in England. Birkabeyn, King of Denmark, died, and at his death gave to one Earl Godard the charge of his kingdom and of his son Havelok and his two daughters, Swanborough and Elfled. Godard stood by his oath no better than Godrich, but cast all three children into prison, and well nigh starved them to death. But when they had lain in prison for a little time, and were nearly dead of hunger, he went to see them.

"How do you fare?" he asked, for Havelok ran to him, and crept upon his knees when he sat down, and looked up joyfully into his face. "I hear that you moan and cry: why is this?"

"We hunger sore," answered Havelok. "We have nought to eat, and no man has brought us meat or drink. We are nigh dead of hunger."

Godard heard his words, but felt no pity; he cared not a straw for their misery. He took Swanborough and Elfled by the hand, and slew them then and there. Thereafter he turned to Havelok and would have slain him also. But the boy in terror cried for mercy. "Have pity," he said. "Spare me and I will give you all Denmark, and will vow never to take up arms against you. Let me live, and I will flee from Denmark this very day, and never more come back; I will take oath that Birkabeyn was not my father."

At that some touch of doubt came into Godard's mind. He put up his knife, and looked at Havelok.

"'Spare me, and I will give you all Denmark,' said Havelok."

"If I let him go alive," he thought, "he might work me much woe. He shall die, but not now. I will cast him in the sea and drown him."

He went thence, and sent for a fisherman named Grim.

"Grim," he said, "you are my thrall; do my will and to-morrow I will give you your freedom. Take the boy Havelok, and at night lead him to the sea and cast him therein."

Grim took the boy, and bound him with strong cords, and bore him on his back to his cottage, and showed him to his wife Leve. "You see this boy, wife," said he. "I am to drown him in the sea; when I have done it, I shall be made a free man, and much gold will be ours; so has our Lord Godard promised."

When Dame Leve heard that, she started up, and threw Havelok down so roughly that he hurt his head on a great stone that lay on the ground.

"Alas that ever I was a King's son," he moaned in his pain; and he lay there where he fell till night-time.

When night fell Grim made ready for his task. "Rise up, wife, blow the fire," said he. "Light a candle. I must keep my word to my lord."

Leve rose to tend the fire. Her eyes fell on Havelok, who still lay on the ground. Round him, she marvelled to see, shone a bright light, and out of his mouth proceeded light as it were a sunbeam.

"What is that light?" quoth Dame Leve. "Rise up, Grim, look what it means; what is this light?"

Grim went to Havelok, and unbound him. He rolled

back the shirt from the boy's shoulder. There he saw, bright and clear, a King's birth-mark.

"Heaven help us," said Grim, "this is the heir to Denmark, who should be King and lord of us all. He will work Godard great harm." Then he fell on his knees before Havelok. "Lord King," he said, "have mercy on me and on Leve here. We are both yours, lord, both your servants. We will keep you and nurture you till you can ride and bear the shield and spear; Godard shall know nought of it. Some day I will take my freedom at your hands, not at his."

Then was Havelok blithe and glad. He sat up and asked for bread. "I am well-nigh dead," he said, "with hunger and hardship."

They fed him and cared for him, and lastly put him to bed; and he slept soundly.

On the morrow Grim went to the traitor Godard. "I have done your will on the boy, lord," he said. "He is drowned in the sea. Now I pray you give me gold for a reward, and grant me my freedom, as you vowed."

Godard looked at him, fierce and cruel of mien. "Will you not rather be made an earl, proud knave?" he asked. "Go home, fool; go, and be evermore a thrall and churl, as you have ever been; no other reward shall be yours. For very little I would lead you to the gallows for your wicked deed."

Grim went away. "What shall I do?" he thought as he hurried home. "He will assuredly hang me on the gallows-tree. It were better to flee out of the land altogether."

He came home, and told Leve all; and they took counsel together. Soon Grim sold all his wool, and his corn, and his cattle, his horses and swine, his geese and hens. Only his boat he kept; and that he made ready for a voyage, with a good mast, strong cables, stout oars, and a new sail, till there was not so much as a nail wanting to make it better. Then he took on board his wife and his three sons, Robert the Red, William Wendat, and Hugh Raven, and his two fair daughters, Gunnild and Levive, and Havelok; and they set sail.

The wind blew fair behind them, and drove them out to sea. Long did they sail, and came at last to England, to Lindsey at the mouth of the Humber.

They landed safely; and before long Grim began to make a little house of clay and turf for them to dwell in. He named the place after himself, Grimsby; and so men call it now, and shall call it for ever, from now even to doomsday.

Grim was a skilful fisherman, and caught many good fish. Great baskets did he make, and others his sons made; and they carried the fish inland in these baskets, and sold them. All over the country did Grim go with his fish, and came home always with store of bread, or corn, or beans, against their need. Much he sold in the fair town of Lincoln, and counted many a coin after his sales there.

Thus Grim fared for many winters; and Havelok worked with the rest, thinking it no shame to toil like any thrall, though he was a King's son born.

There came at last a year of great dearth. Corn

was so scarce that all men were in great poverty, and Grim did not know how to feed all his family. For Havelok he had great dread, for he was strong and lusty, and would eat more than he could earn. And soon the fish in the sea also began to fail them, so that they were in sore straits. But Grim cared more for Havelok than for all his own family; all his thoughts ran on Havelok.

"Dear son Havelok," he said at last, "I trow we shall die of hunger anon; all our food is gone. It is better for you to go hence, and strive for yourself only, and not try to help us here. You are stout and strong; go to Lincoln; there is many a man of substance there, who might take you in service. It were better for you to serve there than to see us starve here and to starve along with us. Would that I could clothe you fitly! Alas, I am too poor. Yet for your sake I will cut up the sail of my boat, and make you a cloak of it to cover your rags."

He took the sail from his boat, and cut it up rudely into a cloak for Havelok. Then Havelok bade him God-speed, and set out. Hose and shoon had he none; on his bare feet he walked, and came in time to the city of Lincoln.

He had no friend in Lincoln, and knew no man. For two days he went to and fro, fasting; no man had work or food for him. But on the third day he heard a cry, "Porters, porters, hither quickly!" He sprang forward like a spark from coal, and thrust aside all who stood in his path; sixteen stout lads did he knock down, and came to where fish was being laden

into carts for Earl Godrich of Cornwall. There stood the Earl's cook, calling for men to lead the carts; and Havelok fell to work with a will at his bidding. Many a great fish did he lift and carry—lampreys, eels, broad plaice, and all manner of kinds.

When all was done, "Will you take service with me?" said the cook to Havelok. "I will pay you good hire and feed you well."

"Give me enough to eat, good sir," answered Havelok, "and I care not what you pay me. I will blow your fire, and fetch wood and water; I can wash dishes, and cleave faggots, and clean eels, and do all that you need."

"You shall be my man," answered the cook.

So Havelok took service in Earl Godrich's household, and drew water and cut wood, and did household tasks. Strong and large was he of body, and God had made him very fair to look on.

Earl Godrich was lord of all England; it lay as it were in his hand. Many men were wont to come to him at Lincoln for advice and to talk of great things; and they held a parliament there, and came thither with a great train of men-at-arms and followers, so that the town was always full of folk coming and going.

It chanced one day that eight or ten young men began to play together near where Havelok was at work; they fell to putting a great stone, huge and heavy. He must needs be a stout man who could so much as lift it to his knee. But those who put it now were champions, and could cast it many a foot.

Havelok looked on and longed to put against them, and his master, seeing his looks, bade him go and try what he could do. He took the stone and poised it well; and at the first effort he put it twelve feet or more farther than any other man.

"We have been here too long," said the rest. "This lad is mightier than any of us; it is time for us to go hence."

They went away, and spread the news that there was at Lincoln a lad mightier than any man of that day; and Havelok's fame grew and was known far and wide. It came at last to Earl Godrich's ears.

"This is a stout knave," thought the Earl, when he heard of Havelok's strength. "I would that he were wedded to Goldborough: he is the fairest and strongest man in England, and if I gave Goldborough to him, I should keep my word to Athelwold in some sort, for there is none like Havelok: no better man could she desire. And if she were wedded to him, she would be out of my way, and I should be secure in my rule, and my son should reign in England after me."

Thus he thought and planned secretly. Anon he sent for Goldborough, and brought her to Lincoln. At her coming he caused bells to be rung, and there was great rejoicing; but he was nevertheless full of cratt.

"You shall have the fairest man alive for husband," he said to Goldborough: "therefore have I sent for you."

"I will wed no man but a King or a King's son, be he never so fair," she answered boldly.

"Would you gainsay me as if you were Queen and

lady over me?" cried Godrich in great wrath. "You shall have a churl for husband, and no other. My cook's knave shall wed you; he shall be your lord. To-morrow shall you be wedded to him."

Goldborough wept and prayed his mercy, but it was of no avail. On the morrow the church-bell was rung, and Godrich sent for Havelok. "Master, are you minded to marry?" he asked.

"Nay, by my life," quoth Havelok. "What should I do with a wife? I cannot feed her or clothe her; I have no house and no possessions. The very clothes I wear are the cook's, and I am his servant."

"If you do not take to wife her whom I will give you," said Godrich, "I will hang you high aloft, or thrust out your eyes."

At that Havelok was sore afraid, and granted all that Godrich bade. Then Godrich sent for Goldborough.

"You will take this man for husband," he said, "or you go to the gallows, unless rather I burn you at the stake."

She was adread at his threats, and durst not refuse, though she liked it ill. So they two were wedded perforce, and neither took joy in it.

When they were married, Havelok knew not what to do. He had no home whereto he might take Goldborough. Godrich had such hatred for Athelwold's daughter that he would do nought to aid them; and Havelok was in sore straits till he bethought him of Grimsby.

Straightway he took Goldborough to Grimsby. But Grim himself was dead. Nevertheless his sons wel-

comed Havelok gladly, and took great joy in his return.

"Welcome, dear lord, and welcome to your fair lady," they said. "We have here horses and nets and ships, gold and silver, and much else that Grim our father bequeathed. But he bade us give them to you; take them, dear lord; they are all yours. You shall be our lord, and we will be your servants in all things."

So Havelok came back to Grimsby. But on the night of his coming Goldborough was sad and sorrowful as she lay beside him, and she could not sleep. Her wakeful eyes fell on Havelok, and she was aware suddenly of a wondrous sight. A bright light, clear and flaming, issued from his mouth, and lit up all the chamber.

"What may this mean?" she said to herself in sore dread. "Does it show me that some high fortune shall come upon Havelok?"

She looked again, and saw a new wonder. On Havelok's shoulder a King's mark shone, a noble cross of red gold; and as she looked, an angel's voice spoke to her: "Goldborough, let your sorrow be; Havelok, your husband, is a King's son and a King's heir. The golden cross signifies that he shall possess all Denmark and England, and shall be King, strong and stark, of both realms. This shall you see with your own eyes, and shall be his Queen and lady."

When she heard the angel's voice Goldborough could not contain her joy, but turned and kissed Havelok as he slept. Havelok had not heard the angel, but he started out of his sleep at Goldborough's kiss.

"Dear lady, are you awake?" he said. "A strange dream have I just dreamed. I thought I was in Denmark, on the highest hill that ever I came to; it was so high that I could see, it seemed, all the world spread out. As I sat there, I began to possess Denmark, with all its towns and strong castles; and my arms were so long that I surrounded in one grasp all Denmark, and drew it towards me till every man therein cleaved to me, and the strong castles began to fall on their knees, and the keys of them were at my feet. Another dream I dreamed also, that I flew over the salt sea to England, and with me went all the folk of Denmark. When I came to England, I took it all into my hand, and, Goldborough, I gave it to you. Dear wife, what may this be?"

"May these dreams turn to joy, Havelok, as I deem they will," answered Goldborough. "I say to you that there is no strong king or emperor who shall be your peer, for you shall wear the crown of England in time to come, and Denmark shall kneel at your feet. Within a year this shall come to pass. Let us two go to Denmark speedily; and do you pray Grim's sons that they go with you, all three."

On the morrow Havelok went to church and besought aid of God. Then he betook himself to Grim's three sons, Robert, and William, and Hugh.

"Listen now to me," he said, "and I will tell you a thing concerning myself. My father was King of the Danish land, and I should have been his heir; but a wicked wight seized the kingdom when my father died, and slew my two sisters, and gave me to Grim to drown;

but Grim spared me, and brought me hither as you know. Now I am come to an age when I can wield weapons and deal stout blows; and never will I take comfort till I see Denmark again. I pray you come thither with me; I will reward you well, and will give each of you ten castles, with the land and towns and woods that belong thereto."[1]

"We will follow you whithersoever you bid us, Havelok," they answered, "and we will, if it please God, win back your kingdom for you."

Havelok gave them due thanks, and began straightway to prepare all things for his going to Denmark. Soon he had made ready, and they set sail. Their voyage prospered, and they landed safely in Denmark, in the dominions of one Ubbe, a rich earl, who had been a friend of King Birkabeyn, Havelok's father.

When Havelok heard who was lord of that part of Denmark, he was glad, and set out to go to Ubbe's castle in good hope. He durst not say yet that he was Birkabeyn's son, for if Earl Godard heard of it, he would come against him and slay him before he could win any followers. But he went to Ubbe and spoke him fair and courteously, and gave him a gold ring, and asked leave to settle in that land to be a merchant; and Ubbe seeing how strong and comely Havelok was, gladly gave him leave, and thereafter bade him to a great feast. Havelok went to the feast, and Goldborough with him,

[1] A small part of the original poem is here missing. I have ventured to follow Prof. Skeat in supplying what is clearly, in substance, the sequence of events. The original begins again, roughly, at "Havelok gave Ubbe a gold ring."

and Grim's sons also; and Ubbe grew to love him so well that when the feast was ended, he sent him with ten knights and sixty men-at-arms to the magistrate of those parts, Bernard Brun, a man of might and substance, to whom Ubbe wrote a letter, saying that Havelok was to be treated courteously in all things.

Bernard was a trusty man, and entertained Havelok and Goldborough and all their company in seemly wise. But as they sat at meat, there came tidings that a band of sixty thieves, well armed and fierce, was at the gate, demanding entrance.

At that news Bernard started up and took a good axe in his hand, and went to the gate; and Havelok followed him.

"What do you here, rascals?" cried Bernard. "If I open the door to you, some of you will rue it. Those whom I slay not shall be put in fetters and cast into prison!"

"What say you?" answered one of the thieves. "Think you that we are adread of you? We shall enter by this gate for all that you can do."

Thereupon he seized a great boulder, and cast it mightily against the gate, and broke it.

Havelok saw what befell, and went to the gate. He drew therefrom the great cross-bar, and threw the gate wide open.

"I abide here," he cried. "Flee, you dogs."

"Nay," quoth one, "you shall pay for waiting;" and he came running at Havelok, and the two others close behind with him. But Havelok lifted up the door-beam, and at one blow slew all three. Then he

turned upon others, and in a moment overthrew four more. But a host of them beset him with swords, and all his skill could not prevent them from wounding him: full twenty wounds had he, from crown to toe. But the smart of them drove him into a rage, and he began so to mow with the beam that the robbers soon felt how hard he could smite. There was none who could escape him, and whosoever he struck he slew; and in a little while he had felled twenty of them.

Then began a great din to arise, for the rest of the thieves set upon Havelok and Bernard with all their might. But Hugh and his brothers heard the noise, and came running with many other men; and before long there was not one of the thieves left alive.

On the morrow tidings came to Ubbe that Havelok had slain with a club more than a score of stout rogues. "What is this?" thought the earl. "I had best go myself and see the rights of the matter."

He went down to Bernard and asked him what had come to pass; and Bernard, sore wounded from the fight, showed him his wounds, and told him how sixty robbers had attacked his house, and how Havelok had slain great plenty of them; but Havelok also, he said, was grievously wounded in many places.

Others also of Bernard's men told the like true tale; and Ubbe sent for Havelok, and when he had seen his wounds, called for a skilful leech, and took Havelok into his house and cared for him.

The first night that Havelok lay in Ubbe's house, Ubbe slept nigh him in a great chamber, with places

"Havelok lifted up the beam, and at one blow slew all three."

boarded off for each man. About midnight he awoke, and saw a great light in the place where Havelok lay, as bright as if it were day.

"What may this be?" he thought. "I will go myself and see. Perchance Havelok secretly holds revel with his friends, and has lit many lights. I vow he shall do no such sottishness in my castle."

He stood up, and peeped in between the boards that shut Havelok from him. He saw him sleeping fast, as still as any stone; and he was aware of a great light coming as it were from Havelok's mouth.

He was aghast at that sight, and called secretly to his knights and sergeants and men-at-arms, more than five score of them, and bade them come and see the strange light; and the light continued to issue from Havelok's mouth, and to grow in strength, till it was like a sunbeam, and as bright as two hundred wax-candles.

Havelok's right shoulder was towards Ubbe and his men. Suddenly, as they looked at the light, they were aware also of a King's mark on the shoulder, a bright cross, brighter than gold, sparkling like a good carbuncle stone.

Then Ubbe knew that Havelok was a King's son, and he guessed that he must be Birkabeyn's son, the rightful King of all Denmark; "Never was any man so like his brother," he said, "as this Havelok is to Birkabeyn; he is Birkabeyn's own heir."

And when Havelok awoke, he fell at his feet and did obeisance, he and all his men. "Dear lord," he said, "I know you to be Birkabeyn's son. You shall

be King of Denmark; right soon shall every lord and baron come and do you homage."

Then was Havelok glad and blithe, and gave thanks to God for His goodness.

Before long Ubbe dubbed Havelok knight; and as soon as he was knighted all the barons and lords of those parts came to him and swore fealty; and anon they crowned him King of Denmark, and set themselves in array to attack the false Earl Godard. But Godard's knights, being weary of his rule, had all gone over to Havelok; and Grim's son Robert sufficed to meet him in combat. Robert wounded him in the right arm, and they bound him and brought him before Havelok.

Sorry now was Godard's lot; all his greatness was gone from him, and he was abased; even as the proverb says, "old sin makes new shame." He came before Havelok and his nobles, and they gave sentence upon him, that he should be flayed alive, and then hanged. And so he came to his end in great misery and torment.

When Godrich in England heard that Havelok was King of all Denmark, and purposed (for Havelok had given out that this was his intent) to come to England and set Goldborough on her throne, he was full rueful and sorry.

"If I let them land and overcome me," he thought, "I shall lose my power."

Thereat he set to work to gather a great host to meet Havelok when he should come; and he spread lying tales to make the English hate and fear Havelok,

saying that he would burn and destroy, and oppress them; and by these means he got together many men and led them to Grimsby.

Anon came Havelok and his men, and landed at Grimsby; and they fought a great battle. Ubbe was the first to meet Godrich, and dealt him many a stout blow, but could not prevail over him; long they struggled; and at last Godrich wounded Ubbe sorely in the side, so that he fell, and his men bare him out of the fray. All that day Havelok's men fought with Godrich's men; and on the morrow they fought again, and Godrich came face to face with Havelok himself.

"Godrich," Havelok cried, "you have taken Athelwold's kingdom for yourself; I claim it for his daughter Goldborough. Yield it up, and I will forgive you, for you are a doughty knight."

"Never will I yield," answered Godrich: "I will slay you here, and put out your eyes that now look on me, if you do not flee right speedily."

He gripped his sword, and smote at Havelok, and clove his shield in twain. But Havelok drew his own good sword, and with one blow felled him to the earth. Yet Godrich started up again, and dealt him such a stroke on the shoulder that his armour was broken, and the blade bit into the flesh. Then Havelok heaved up his sword in turn, and struck fiercely, and shore off Godrich's hand, so that he could smite no more, but yielded as best he might.

They seized Godrich and fettered him; and all the English took the oath of fealty to Goldborough, and

swore to be her men. Then they passed judgment on Godrich, and sentenced him to be burnt to death.

So Havelok and Goldborough came again into their kingdoms; and Havelok rewarded Grim's sons and made them barons. Of Grim's daughters, Bernard married one, and was made Earl of Cornwall in place of Godrich; and the other was wedded to the Earl of Chester. Havelok was crowned King of England as well as of Denmark; and full sixty winters did he reign with Goldborough in great joy and prosperity.

THE END

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